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ADRIFT IN THE TREE-TOPS.

By ALLYN DRAPER.



They screamed and chattered, shrieked and whirred, beating the air with their wings, and making a tremendous fluttering, their principal point of attack being the young fellow's face and eyes.

ADrift IN THE TREE-TOPS.

By ALLYN DRAPER,

Author of "Buffalo Bill, Jr., and His Band of Dead Snots," "Tom Topp," "Pablo the Gipsy," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A WILD waste of waters, with here and there a mass of tangled foliage appearing above the surface.

An uprooted tree floating down the stream amid the desolate waste of waters, with no signs of habitation—nothing but silence and gloom!

In the branches of the tree, which rise to a considerable height above the waters, are two boys, or young men, one evidently a genuine American, the other of mixed parentage.

The first, a young fellow of about eighteen, is called Sam Templeton, and is a native of the United States.

The other is a Brazilian by birth, his mother being an American woman, the lad himself having been born in Rio Janeiro, his father being a rich merchant and a native of the city.

His name is Jose de Loando, but he is universally called Joe by his American friend, between whom and himself there exists a deep affection.

The two boys are adrift in the submerged forest lying on the borders of the gigantic Amazon, and have been floating upon their strange craft for about an hour.

No other human being is in sight, and the scene might well produce gloomy reflections.

The boys were lightly clad in white trousers and loose shirts, as befitted the warmth of the climate, and around the waist of each was a broad sash, in which were stuck a long knife and a brace of pistols.

They were without hats, and their curling locks fell carelessly over their sunburnt foreheads.

How they came to be in their present plight we will explain at length as we proceed, it being sufficient for the present to say that they have been in the tree-top but little more than an hour, and that their former companions have disappeared.

They were sitting perched among the branches, chatting gayly, despite their gloomy surroundings, when Joe's quick ear caught a suspicious sound among the branches below him.

"Listen!" he cried. "We have a companion with us."

"A man?" asked Sam.

"I know not. Look below and tell me what you see."

"It is dark here. Wait till we drift into the sunlight. I see a hollow between two of the larger branches."

"There is a hole in the trunk."

"Undoubtedly, and that is how our tree so quickly succumbed to the flood."

"Listen."

"Something is moving up the hollow place. There is a man or animal in the trunk."

"Hardly a man, for he would have come out sooner than this."

"But I can see his eyes and hear—"

"Buenos Dios!" cried the young Brazilian.

"It is a snake, and a monster at that!"

Here the boys saw the real character of their traveling companion, and it was no wonder their faces were blanched and that for the instant they seemed incapable of action.

Gliding from the hollow trunk of the huge *sapucaya*—the tallest of the Brazilian trees and bearing a species of the Brazil nut—was the form of a huge serpent or boa, his eyes shining like diamonds, and his forked tongue darting in and out with lightning-like rapidity.

The eyes glittered and sparkled with a restless, shifting light, as though the monster reptile was looking around for his prey, and the boys shuddered as they perceived that baleful gaze fixed upon themselves.

"We are lost!" cried Joe. "It is the monster of the woods, as terrible as the dreaded 'mother of the waters.' Nothing can subdue this hideous reptile."

"Don't let your superstitions run away with your common sense, Joe," cried Sam. "Here, let us retreat to these large branches."

The serpent, seeing the boys about to shift their position, drew his entire length out of the trunk, and, with a frightful hiss, began to intercept the boys.

He was all of fifteen feet in length and as big around as a man's body; quite a formidable opponent to two young boys with nothing but the insecure foothold of a floating tree beneath them.

"Give a jump, Joe," cried Sam, clearing the smaller branches and alighting on the broad trunk, where he seized a stout limb with his left hand, and drew his keen blade with his right.

The serpent intercepted the young Brazilian, or rather made it dangerous for him to attempt to join his companion, who stood bravely facing the monster, resolved to fight to the death.

"Stay where you are, Joe," said Sam, "and make ready for a fight. I am going to attack this fellow, and if he comes your way, hack him to pieces."

"Let us leave the tree; there are others near at hand."

"Jump into the water and have this fellow go after us? No, no, he wants to fight here, and I am going to accommodate him."

Thrusting back his loose shirt-sleeve, so that it might not interfere with his movements, Sam advanced fearlessly, and looking the furious reptile straight in the eye, raised his arm for a blow.

The serpent raised his head, and, circling around, as if seeking for a place to strike, lashed his tail in anger and sought to coil his crushing folds about the boy's body.

Throwing his tail around, he suddenly leaped, as it were, right upon the lad, raising his head high in the air, and then darting downward with terrible rapidity, sought to wind himself about his human foe.

Clutching one of the folds in his left hand and adroitly throwing it from him, Sam aimed a deadly blow at the creature's side with his knife.

The steel glanced off as though from rubber, and at that moment one of the folds fell around Sam's body.

Pressing his hand against his waist with the knife at right angles to it, Sam moved it quickly in a horizontal direction, as the strong muscles began to contract around him.

Blood spurted out, and the python writhed in agony, uncoiling himself and darting his fangs once more at Sam's head.

The lad plunged his knife point deep into the lower jaw of the reptile, and withdrew his hand as the upper jaw descended upon the handle.

The point sank deeper, and the sharp teeth of the upper jaw becoming wedged on either side of the handle, the creature's mouth was held open, Sam narrowly escaping being struck by the poisoned fangs as they darted in and out like a flash.

The serpent writhed and vainly endeavored to crush the knife in its powerful jaws, his efforts only serving to drive the point deeper and wedge the handle more firmly between the teeth.

Sam sprang out of the way of those writhing, twisting folds, one coil of which about his body would crush in his ribs, and then Joe, coming up from behind, drove his knife deep into the monster's neck, pinning it to the branch by a dexterous move.

Sam then drew his pistol, and firing a bullet between his extended jaws, reached a vital spot, and ended the creature's life.

The boys breathed freer after the death of their powerful antagonist, but this struggle was but a passing incident in the eventful career before them while ADrift IN THE TREE-TOPS.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER their adventure with the serpent, the boys settled down among the branches, leaving their late enemy still depending from the stout limb where he had been pinned, while Sam put his pistol in his belt and said:

"Well, Joe, that was a narrow escape?"

"It was, indeed, and if old Pablo had seen the fight he would have been more pleased than ever with you, who are his pet."

"The old fellow's eyes would have stuck out bigger than yours did when he told you of the bag of diamonds down there in Rio."

"And that reminds me that we have lost Paulina again by our losing the right channel."

"Caramba! When I think of that villain Paget it makes my blood boil."

"However, we can do nothing now, and I am terribly hungry. Suppose we eat some of these nuts."

"They wouldn't be bad."

"But how are you going to open these shells? They are as hard as Satan's forehead, to use a sailor's expression."

"Stop a bit, and I'll show you. It's easy enough when you know how."

Grasping one of the shells, which were as large as cocoanuts, the young American-Brazilian wrenched it from the branch with a dexterous twist.

The vessel opened in an instant, and a shower of Brazil nuts fell out, Joe catching them in his lap and throwing a handful to Sam.

"That's what we call a monkey pot," he said with a laugh, pointing to the empty shell or receptacle in his hand. "The monkeys are fond of these nuts."

"I'm going to have a cap," said Sam, and treating one of the monkey pots as Joe had done, he filled his pockets with the nuts and clapped the covering upon his head.

It was somewhat large, but lining it with bark and leaves, produced a strong, light helmet, which protected his head from the rays of the sun, and served as well as the best hat that was ever blocked.

Joe laughed at the odd figure which his companion presented, but nevertheless adapted his suggestion and was soon crowned with one of the monkey pots, the two boys looking like soldiers in some backwoods Brazilian army.

The nuts afforded a good meal, being very nutritious, although the boys felt that they would not want to be confined to a steady diet of them.

The floating tree drifted on and on, and presently entered a place where the branches of the submerged trees were so thick above their heads as to obscure the sun and cause a darkness almost black as that of night.

"Do you know I think we are going just contrary to the way we want to take," said Joe.

"You mean that we are going down stream, toward Para, instead of up?"

"Not that exactly, but in the back water, as you would call this flooded region, the *gapo*, as we Brazilians call it, the current is now setting from the main stream. By and by it will be turned toward the river again."

"If we had any means of propelling our odd craft we could pull against the current."

"Let us hope that we may find Pablo before

long, and take counsel with him. He would know just what to do."

They floated on for two or three hours, being still in the shadow, when Joe suddenly cried out:

"*Per Dios!* Do you hear that?"

"It sounds like a scream. Can it be—"

"That is the cry of the jaguar, the terror of South American forests. Ah, there it is again."

"A jaguar? Then we must be near land?"

"It does not follow. He may have been caught by the inundation, and been obliged to take to the tree-tops like us."

"There it is again, and nearer than before."

For answer Joe drew Sam's knife from the open mouth of the anaconda, washed it in the current, and handed it to his companion.

Then he recovered his own weapon, allowing the head of the monstrous snake to fall into the water, where it left a tiny stream of blood.

The cry of the jaguar was repeated with startling distinctness.

Sam looked up and could see two fiery eyes glaring at him, and could just distinguish the outlines of the huge creature's form lying along a branch.

He drew his pistol, which he had reloaded after the fight with the anaconda, and fired point blank at the blazing eyes above him.

The bullet was intercepted by a twig, and struck the brute in the side, maddening, but not seriously hurting him.

There was a scream, a crackling of branches, and then a sound as of a flying body, and with a howl like that of a fiend, the jaguar struck the tree-tops right between the two boys.

Sam nearly lost his head in the sudden fright he felt, and came very near falling into the water, the shock, as the jaguar alighted upon the tree, being considerable.

He seized a limb near him and retreated a step, the animal, to his horror, giving a leap towards Joe the next instant.

As the brute made the spring, the young Brazilian clutched his knife nervously, and plunged it to the hilt in the creature's throat.

The danger was not past by any means, and Sam, bounding forward, discharged his other pistol into the animal's side.

This turned the attention of the fierce creature from Joe to himself, and with a shriek, it wheeled quickly and rushed upon him, the trunk of the tree swaying frightfully with the motion imparted to it.

Dropping upon one knee, Sam quickly drew his knife and struck at the jaguar, who, with one stroke of his paw, sent the weapon flying from Sam's hand and cast it into the branches.

In another moment the creature's jaws would have been fastened in his throat, and the red blood would have followed, but at that instant of peril Joe rushed to the rescue.

Seizing the huge jaw of the angry jaguar in his hand, he pulled the animal's head over backward, and aiming a fierce blow right under the fore-shoulder, drove the knife, handle and all, deep into the flesh.

With a tremendous convulsion, the jaguar rolled into the water, Joe drawing out his knife as the carcass plunged into the current.

For several minutes neither of the boys spoke a word, so overcome were they with emotion, and even when this had passed away they contented themselves with quietly shaking each other's hands before either of them spoke.

"Another narrow escape," said Sam. "If I had thought that brute was going to make so much fuss I would not have peppered him. I hadn't any idea he was so big, from seeing him up there."

"I would have stopped you if I had seen what you were doing, for it does not do to disturb these fellows, and it's a mercy that we are not both dead this minute."

By this time the boys were greatly fatigued, and, securing themselves among the branches, they stretched out and were soon sound asleep, having taken up positions from which there was no chance of their falling into the water.

How long they slept they did not know; but when they awoke it was dark, and they had floated into an open space lined by tall, palm-like trees.

Suddenly a bright blaze shot up and cast a weird reflection upon the waters.

"Heavens and earth! There is a fire among the tree-tops!" cried Sam.

"More than one," added Joe, as a dozen

fires suddenly blazed up right among the very tops of the submerged trees.

"We are in the midst of a village of palm-dwellers!" cried Joe. "Pray Heaven they do not see us, for they are terrible creatures!"

CHAPTER III.

"PALM-DWELLERS?" repeated Sam, in astonishment.

"Yes; take a look at these fellows and tell us what you see."

"I see large platforms built in the trees, big enough to hold half a dozen men. They are fastened at the corners by stout withes into notches made in the trees."

"And the dwellers themselves?"

"They are nearly naked, and as brown as berries. The platforms are roofed over in some instances, and some of them are built so close together that you could step from one to another without difficulty."

These platforms, which served as houses for the savage tribes which inhabited them, were all built above high water, and were approached by ladders depending down the trunks to the water.

There were a great many of them, the place being a regular village, some of the huts or platforms being small and others again quite large and pretentious, as though the chiefs or high rulers lived in them.

The Amazon, Orinoco and other large rivers of Brazil are peopled by these singular beings who may be said to live in the trees, whole tribes gathering together and building these strange habitations, where men are born, spend their lives and die, the monotony of life being broken by making incursions from time to time upon their neighbors.

Between the different Indian tribes that inhabit that part of the country, there exists the deadliest hatred, and wars between them are of frequent occurrence, the strife being most sanguinary, blood flowing like water, and human life being held in the lightest estimation.

"I don't see how they can have fires up there in the trees," said Sam. "How is it that the platforms don't burn?"

"Because their fire-places are made of flat stones placed in the center of the platforms."

"What do they live on?"

"Fruit, fish and flesh, when they can get it."

"Animals?"

"Yes, human animals."

"Do you mean to say they are cannibals?"

"Yes, and particularly when whites are around, as the Indians remember bitterly the cause of their being obliged to live this wild life. The hated slave trade which still exists despite the efforts of civilized nations to put it down, drove them out of their happy homes, and it is no wonder that they regard the whites with feelings of revenge."

"There are boats here, Joe. Can we not get one? It will be better than our tree."

"There are a few canoes, sure enough," Sam said, "but in each one there is a guard, who would give the alarm on the instant and bring down a swarm of these fellows upon us. If they suspected that our tree contained occupants we should not be allowed to move along so quietly."

Sam had noticed that the fires were all upon the edge of the submerged wood, extending around the outer or water edge of the circle, and that they were now back from it, and Joe now made his way in among the trees, where the light would not be likely to fall upon him, and here awaited in silence for an opportunity to capture one of the canoes.

This prudent plan was not destined to be carried out, however, for presently Joe's paddle broke, and an eddy catching the tree carried it, with full force against one of the palms where a boat or canoe was hitched.

The dusky occupant at once sprang to his feet, and seeing the boys set up a shout, at the same time dashing upon them.

He had a short, stout club depending from his white cloth girdle, and seizing this he struck Sam a blow upon the head.

The boy's improvised helmet took off the force of the blow, and beyond being slightly stunned he was unhurt.

Joe flew to the rescue in an instant, and wrenching the man's club from his hand before he could recover himself for a second blow, whacked him across the head with a force that nearly fractured his skull and toppled him over into the water.

In an instant the two boys had jumped into the canoe, cut it adrift, and seizing the

paddles, began to make away with all possible speed.

The startled cry of the Indian had been heard, however. Half a dozen canoes came paddling towards the fugitives, and a number of dusky forms came scrambling down the ladders like so many monkeys, their naked skins shining in the fire-light.

The woods and the waters fairly resounded with the cries of the excited Indians, who belonged to the fierce Mura tribe, one of the most blood-thirsty of the Brazilian forest dwellers, the scene fairly baffling description.

In the tree-tops themselves the greatest confusion prevailed, men, women, children and dogs howling, screaming, yelling and barking. Pandemonium itself being nothing in comparison.

One canoe, the foremost, came alongside that of the boys, and a sharp battle at once ensued, both parties being resolved to fight to the death.

Joe was in the after part of the canoe, and calling upon Sam to keep the craft in motion, raised his paddle and smote the foremost Indian across the face with the broad blade, made of the shoulder blade of a fish-cow or manatee.

The sharp blade cut a frightful gash in the Mura's forehead, and with a cry of rage he fell forward upon his face.

Right and left flew the blows directed by the sturdy arms of the brave youth, and more than one dusky foe felt their force, the leader shouting loudly not to kill the daring boy, but to capture him, that he might be tortured with all the devilish ingenuity they were capable of.

Joe felt his arm weakening, and Sam, beholding this, sprang to his assistance, just in time to prevent him from being felled by a blow from a club.

A powerful stroke of the paddle then shot the canoe ahead, but others had approached by this time, and the situation was one of the most deadly peril.

Suddenly, as a larger canoe than the others shot forward, propelled by the powerful arms of half a dozen savages, Sam dropped his paddle, and drawing both pistols fired a volley at the foe.

The sound was a totally unexpected one, although the Muras were not unacquainted with the nature of fire-arms, and for an instant the utmost panic prevailed.

Two of the Indians had been killed, and their bodies falling into the water, had nearly capsized the canoe, the men with paddles being thrown into the utmost confusion.

A new complication now made its appearance, for as the boys' canoe shot away from the pursuers for an instant, Joe shouted out: "The huts are afire!"

The fire extended with alarming rapidity, and for the nonce the chase of the daring boys was abandoned.

Suddenly there came a piercing shriek, and looking in the direction of the sound, the boys beheld a startling sight.

Upon one of the largest platforms, already almost wholly enveloped in flames, stood a lovely girl, fair and beautiful, clothed in a flowing robe of white, which set off her charms to the utmost, clustering locks of raven hair falling over her exquisite shoulders, and a form that was absolute perfection, indicating her to be of Caucasian birth, and not of the hated Mura race.

She stood with her arms uplifted in mute appeal to Heaven; her head thrown back so as to reveal her lovely face, upon which the firelight shone with full force.

At the instant, a stalwart savage leaped upon the burning platform and catching the girl—evidently a captive—in his arms, sprang away just as the timbers fell in with a crash.

"*Madre de Dios!*" exclaimed Joe. "It is Paulina herself. To the rescue! She must be saved at all hazards!"

CHAPTER IV.

It will be necessary, at this stage of our narrative, to take a retrospective glance, in order to explain many things which would otherwise not be clearly understood, and give an insight into the motives of our characters, and settle their positions more distinctly in the minds of our readers.

For the present, therefore, we will leave our heroes in the tree-tops, and describe their adventures previous to our meeting with them in the inundated regions of the Amazon.

"Hark! What noise is that?"

"The sound of wheels."

"No, no; not that."

"*Per Dios!* It is a scream. Some woman is in danger. I know the cry well, for no one but a woman screams when she should be the most quiet."

"My God, Joe, the sound approaches nearer. Some one is being run away with."

Jose was the son of a rich merchant in Rio Janeiro, as we have before stated, and Sam was a clerk, attached to the American Legation, the two being firm friends, Joe having a natural liking for Americans on his mother's account.

It was early evening, and the two boys were strolling in the suburbs of the city, having been to an eminence whence the emperor's palace could be seen in all its stately beauty, and they were now returning at their ease, being in no need to hasten.

Of a sudden Sam had heard the sound of carriage wheels and a piercing shriek, which convinced him at once that something was amiss.

As he darted forward and around a turn in the broad avenue, he perceived that his surmises had been correct.

Coming towards him at full gallop were two fiery steeds, drawing an open barouche, in which sat a lovely girl, fairer than most Brazilian women, but whose dark locks and jet-black eyes denoted plainly the land of her birth.

She was completely overcome with terror at her perilous situation, and well she might be, for a deep ditch lay on one side of the avenue, and it was not at all improbable that the carriage might be thrown into it at any moment.

"*Madre de Dios!* It is Paulina!" cried Joe. "She must not perish!"

Dashing forward, Sam sprang into the middle of the road, directly in front of the maddened animals, and calling out in commanding tones for them to stop, seized the bridle of one in a firm grasp.

The excited beasts reared and plunged, but Sam held on with a strong grip and brought them to their haunches in an instant.

Meantime Joe had stepped up to the carriage, and said in a pleasant voice:

"Rest assured, *Senorita* Paulina, there is no further danger. My friend is an excellent trainer of ungovernable steeds, and I envy him his power only that I might have had the pleasure of doing you such a great service."

"Ah, *Senor* Jose, I am afraid you are more gallant than daring, but I thank you all the same, because through you I may know your friend."

"My name is Sam Templeton, at your service," said our hero, in the Portuguese language, with which he was familiar.

The lady answered him in English, however, saying, with a smile:

"You do not know how much I thank you, sir, for your brave conduct. My horses are not usually frightened, but I have to thank an admirer of mine for the accident."

"Was it Paget?" asked Joe.

"Ah! you are jealous of the French *medico*, my friend," said the lady, smiling. "Yes, it was he, indeed, and, on the whole, I am glad that the beasts ran away."

"You will allow us to drive you back to the city?" asked Sam. "The evening is coming on, and it is not always safe for travelers to be outside the city after nightfall."

"You are very kind," answered the lady, graciously, at the same time accepting the proffered aid with a strange thrill at her heart, which could not have been occasioned by mere gratitude towards her young preserver.

Paulina de Rimeros, the young lady whom Sam had so gallantly rescued, was the daughter of one of the richest men in Rio, or perhaps in all Brazil.

Her hand was sought for by many, but hitherto she had refused all advances, treating all with courtesy, but giving none the encouragement they were so fain to receive.

Joe was well acquainted with the young heiress, and had been smitten as had the rest, and while he considered that he had the best chance of any one, there was not that cordiality in the young lady's treatment of him which he would have liked to see.

Another admirer was the Frenchman already mentioned, the so-called Dr. Paget, a man of about forty years.

He was thought to be very wealthy, and

certainly he made a great show and dash, but rumor had it that the fountain of his wealth lay very near the roulette table, and he was oftener seen in the gambling palaces than in the salons of the aristocratic.

He had expressed the utmost admiration for Paulina, and had made several vigorous attempts to obtain her hand, and though repulsed both by Rimeros and his daughter, renewed the attack more indefatigably than ever.

He had resolved to possess himself of the young girl, and we shall see how he prospered in his resolutions as we proceed, and show how, through him, our heroes happened to be in the submerged forest.

After that adventurous evening Sam became one of the admirers of the wealthy Paulina, but more fortunate than the others, seemed to have kindled the fires of love in the young girl's breast, and was soon regarded by all as the most favored suitor; and the gossips predicted a happy marriage at no distant day.

Sam and Joe were frequent visitors at the residence of the opulent Portuguese, and the former was a great favorite with both father and daughter.

There was an old servitor, half Indian, half Portuguese, at the house of Rimeros, named Pablo, and he took a great interest in our hero.

One night he detained Sam in the courtyard, and told him of a packet containing diamonds of great value, which he had been obliged to secrete upon the banks of a river near the Fort of Poinipe da Beira, in the province of Matto Grosso.

"I was pursued by Indians, having made my way from Matto Grosso as far as the fort in safety, but here I was obliged to secrete my treasure and fly for my life. I have the spot marked down upon a piece of parchment, with full directions how to reach it, and also a description of a hidden mine in the mountains where there are diamonds of incomparable value in a situation unsuspected by any one. These shall be yours as your marriage gift, if you have the courage to seek

"What is that?" asked Sam, suddenly. "I thought I heard a muttered exclamation."

"No—no; it was but the wind," said old Pablo. "I have the parchment, and will give it to you when next you call. The hour is late and I must not detain you. Good-night."

As Sam passed out of the courtyard he did not see a shadowy figure crouching in the darkness, nor hear, in muttered tones, these words:

"Mine shall be the peerless Paulina! Mine shall be these priceless gems!"

CHAPTER V.

Two nights after that Sam received a note from Jose, asking him to call upon him at once, as he had important news to communicate.

He posted around to his friend's house, where, to his great astonishment, he discovered that Jose had just gone out, without saying where he was going or telling when he would be back.

Three hours slipped by, and then Sam determined to go and seek his friend, thinking that something must have happened to him.

When half way between Jose's residence and his own, he suddenly came upon his friend in a great hurry.

"Where have you been?" asked both, in a breath. "I've been waiting two or three hours for you."

Neither answered the question, and then both started off again:

"What did you mean by your note?"

Both answered the question by asking another, in chorus:

"What note?"

"Why, the one you sent."

"I never sent any."

"Yes, you did."

"Let me see it."

"Here it is."

Two notes were exchanged, and after a few hasty glances both said simultaneously:

"Why, it's a forgery!"

"Hold up, Joe, let me see that note. By George, can you not see a similarity in the handwriting, in spite of the attempt at imitating two different hands?"

"*Caramba!* They are the same. What can this mean?"

"I don't know, but I fear much. Come, let us go to the house of *Senor* da Rimeros."

It did not take them long to reach the house of the rich Portuguese, but all was dark within and without, and had not a door on the opposite side of the court been standing open, they would have thought that the family had all retired.

They quickly crossed the court, and Sam was about to enter by the open door, when his foot suddenly struck something which gave out a groan.

"*Santo spiritu!* What is that?" cried Joe, in alarm.

Sam stooped down, and by the dim light he saw the form of a man stretched out in the doorway.

"It is Pablo," said Jose.

"What has happened?" asked Sam of the old man. "Are you hurt?"

"More stunned than hurt, young sir. Raise me up and carry me in. I will tell you all."

The two lads raised the old man and carried him to his own apartments, where lights were speedily procured.

His clothing was greatly disordered, and the coat he wore had been torn open and cut across the breast, as though the assailant had been searching for something.

"The parchment I told you of," said Pablo. "It is gone."

"And your mistress—"

"Has been carried away by that villain, the false *medico*."

"Tell me the whole story," said Sam, excitedly, binding up the old man's wounds and making him drink a glass of wine.

"In the early evening the young lady was sitting, awaiting your coming, when a messenger came for the *senor* and called him away."

"That there might be no one in the house," mused our hero. "I perceive the plot."

"The servants had all gone off to a fete, except myself," continued Pablo, "and while I was sitting alone below and my lady was waiting alone above, the *medico* entered, pushed me aside and went up-stairs."

"I heard a stifled scream, and in a moment the villain Paget appeared, bearing the insensible form of my mistress in his unholy arms."

"I attempted to dispute his path, when he struck me down, and then, leaving my lady upon the cold stones, attacked me and deprived me of my treasure—the parchment describing the hiding-place of the diamonds."

"Then it was not the wind that I heard the other night, but the muttered exclamations of this wretch, who must have heard our conference?"

"He said as much, and swore that he should possess both treasures—the diamonds and my sweet young lady."

"And da Rimeros?"

"Has not returned. I fear some evil has befallen him. Where could this villain have taken the *senorita*?"

At that instant a knocking was heard outside, and Pablo, who had greatly recovered from his pain, left the apartment to see what it meant.

"This is the palace where *Senor* da Rimeros used to live?" asked an officer of the police.

"And where he lives still."

"Not so; your master is dead, and here is all that remains of him," pointing to an object which now appeared.

This was a bier, borne by four stout men, and covered with a white pall.

"Ah, this has been an unfortunate night. Tell me—how did my master meet his death?"

It seemed that the rich Portuguese had gone to the place mentioned by the messenger, and had found that he had been duped—that no one wanted him—and instantly suspecting a plot, for Paulina had acquainted him with Paget's previous attempts to abduct her, had turned his footsteps hastily homeward.

When in front of a noted gambling-house he saw Paget come out, and with him a stranger, both deeply engaged in conversation.

"Await me at the steamer," said Paget; "the one which sails to-night. I will have my prize with me. You will go along as the father."

"And you?"

"Will accompany you in disguise. Once

in Para, you will await my return. I have an errand in the mountains."

"Would it not be better for me to take her at once to France or England, and then await your coming?"

"We will decide when we get to Para. Go now to the steamer, and engage passage for Rimeros and his daughter."

"But they know him?"

"I will come aboard closely wrapped up. You will say that I am indisposed. We retire, you remain on guard in your state-room, which will be outside of the lady's, and I appear as M. Dubourg, bound for France."

"It is well."

"I have put them all out of the way, the father in one place, the two *cavalleros* in another, and no one in the house but the major domo. I have an account to settle with him, too."

Rimeros had heard enough, and springing upon the two plotters, he seized Paget by the throat, and called loudly for assistance.

The villainous companion leaped upon him, he felt an icy chill go all through him, and then he fell upon the pavement with a deadly wound in his breast, while the two villains hurried away to complete their diabolical schemes.

CHAPTER VI.

SEÑOR RIMEROS was picked up and carried into a house close at hand and restoratives given him, but these could but give him a fictitious strength, as his moments were already numbered.

He lived long enough, however, to repeat all that he had heard, and then fell into a stupor, from which he awoke no more on earth.

The boys were informed of all that had taken place, being obliged to listen to the whole report, although they chafed under the restraint and protested that they ought to be allowed to go to the steamer in order to prevent the escape of the abductor and murderer.

The chief of police had his own views about this, however, and the statements of Pablo and the boys were taken before they were allowed to depart.

It was all over at last, and in an instant the two boys bounded away side by side, making all speed to the steamer's dock, there being no carriages to be had at that time, or at least none in sight.

When they at last reached the place, the steamer had gone half an hour, and beyond a doubt the two plotters were aboard with the lovely Paulina a captive.

There was clearly no more to be done that night, but early the next morning Sam went to the office and found upon the passenger list the following names:

"Senor Don Paolo da Rimeros and daughter. M. Claude Dubourg, Paris."

"As I thought," muttered Sam. "What is to be done next?"

"Don't you know?"

"By George! Yes, I do! Charter a small steamer and pursue the fugitives. There are several here that can easily make the voyage to Para, along the coast."

Without further delay a steamer had been chartered. With old Pablo, who prayed earnestly to be taken along, a crew and some officers of the police, they started out on their mission.

Joe and Sam stood on the quarter-deck beside the pilot, while in the cabin arranging berths, packing away luggage and doing a dozen other things, was Pablo, his swarthy face gleaming with deep satisfaction.

The large steamer was nearly twelve hours ahead of the little one, but her captain had orders to pile on all steam and make as much speed as he was capable of in order to over-haul the other steamer if possible before she reached Para.

"The Capitan, the other steamer, averages twelve knots an hour," said the captain, a true Yankee like Sam himself, "while we, with fair winds and under our present pressure, can make fifteen."

"Then as the case stands now she is one hundred and forty-four miles ahead of us, and we are now gaining three miles an hour. It will take forty-eight hours to make that up."

"And in that time she will have gone very nearly six hundred miles."

"At all events we shall see her in four days at our present rate. Could you make better speed if you tried?"

"Yes, the Rio Negro, that's us, can go eighteen if she's pushed."

"Suppose the Capitan should suspect the reason for our following them? Would she lie to and let us come aboard?"

"She might, if the royal colors were displayed, together with the police signal. Her captain don't care much for Brazilians, though, and would just as lief as not pretend that he didn't understand he was wanted."

"Then, if worst comes to worst, we'll have to board her and take possession of our prisoners by main force."

"You'd better not do that. The best way would be to go aboard quietly, tell them that you wanted to take that particular steamer, and then when you get to Para, arrest your man, rescue your young lady, and there you are without having interfered with Uncle Sam's rights in the least."

In four days the Rio Negro had not sighted the Capitan, and by this time the weather began to grow stormy, with head winds and dense fogs, which made traveling dangerous in the extreme.

For a day and a half the fog continued, and even after it lifted the head winds still blew strongly, and greatly impeded their progress, the steamer laboring heavily, yet doing her best through it all.

On the sixth day the weather became more propitious, the Rio Negro going ahead under full sail and steam, the boys standing on the quarter-deck, and a man on the top-sail yard keeping a sharp lookout for the fugitives.

Suddenly there came the hail, shrill and clear:

"Sail, ho!"

"What is she?" yelled the captain.

"A steamer, sir!"

"The Capitan?"

"I think so, sir!"

All that afternoon the small steamer gained upon her larger rival, and just before sunset the two came near enough to hail each other, when the Rio Negro signaled for the other to lie to while they sent an officer aboard.

Much to Sam's astonishment the signal was honored and the captain lay to, a boat being lowered from the Rio Negro, containing the two boys and old Pablo, the officer of the police and four seamen.

In a moment the boys and the officer stood upon the deck, and the latter stepping aft said to the captain:

"Senor Capitan, there are two criminals and an abducted lady on board your vessel. I have a royal warrant for their delivery on board the Rio Negro."

"Glad to do anything to assist you, senor. If we've any suspicious characters aboard we'll be glad to give 'em up."

"Let me see your passenger list."

It was brought out, but no such names as M. Dubourg or Senor Rimeros and daughter were to be found upon it.

"We must search the steamer," said the officer.

"Search away," answered the captain. "I'll do all I can to help you."

The search resulted in nothing, however, as when the steamer had been gone over from stem to stern, not the least trace of the two villains and the unfortunate girl could be found.

CHAPTER VII.

"ARE you satisfied?" asked the captain.

"You have not had Senorita Rimeros aboard since you started?"

"No."

"How is it that her name was upon the passenger list in the office at Rio Janeiro?"

"Passage was engaged, but the parties were late, and we had to go without them. Our own list shows only those that are on board at present."

"Was M. Dubourg also late?" asked Sam.

"Don't know such a man."

"Did he not engage a passage a short time before you sailed?"

"Not that I know of. I had no such man with me since we left Rio."

"Have you any Frenchmen at all?"

"You have seen all my passengers. I can't tell a Frenchman from a Dutchman or an Italian. All foreigners are alike to me. They're all a set of outlandish heathens."

Sam was greatly annoyed, although he contrived to conceal his emotion from the captain and crew of the Capitan.

"Did you find what you wanted?" asked the captain.

"No, but as your steamer is larger and more comfortable than the Rio Negro, I have concluded to go the rest of the way with you."

"Really, sir, I should be most happy if there was room, but—"

"There is a large vacant state-room in the after cabin, next to your own. My friend and I will take it, and our servant can go in the steerage or second cabin."

"Don't you think you are mistaken about—"

"Not at all. I noticed particularly that the room was vacant. It will suit my friend and myself to a nicety."

"Your passenger list shows a vacancy," said the officer, "and if the young gentlemen wish the room, I do not see how you can refuse them."

The captain bit his lip, and then said with a smile:

"The room is usually reserved for ladies and private friends of my own, and I—"

"Consider us your private friends," said Joe, quickly. "You will find us most agreeable companions. Say the word, and we will have our baggage transferred at once. There is not much."

"I shall have to charge you a hundred dollars for the room, as it is extra large, and only used by—"

"Quite reasonable, indeed," said Jose, producing a bag of gold coins. "Here is just the sum you require."

The captain's eyes glistened, for he was not proof against the power of hard money, and controlling the annoyance he really felt, said as graciously as possible:

"That is the strongest argument you have yet offered, and I submit. Consider yourselves my passengers from this moment. Make haste about getting your baggage aboard, for we have already lost considerable time."

This occupied less time than the captain imagined, for at a signal from Sam, who had determined from the start to take passage upon the Capitan, Pablo had already taken the boat back to the other steamer, and at this moment he was seen returning.

"Here is the money for our servant also," said Sam, as Pablo came aboard again, carrying his young master's luggage. "Now you can go ahead as soon as you like."

Then turning to the officer, who was about to take his place in the boat, our hero said quickly, in a low tone of voice, inaudible to all save him for whose ears the words were intended:

"Continue on to Para, and when we arrive watch carefully all who land. I am convinced that the men we seek are aboard, despite appearances."

"It shall be done," answered the other, and then he descended into the boat and was quickly pulled to the smaller steamer.

The latter continued upon her course, much to the other captain's astonishment, and by the end of an hour she had gained considerably upon the larger vessel.

"How is this?" he said to Sam. "I thought she was going to return."

"There are other passengers who have chartered her to Para, and the captain is obliged to stick to his agreement."

"Could they not take passage with me? I have plenty of room."

"I understood you to say you had not," said Sam, instantly.

"Oh, that was all bosh," and then turning away sought his cabin, and was not seen for the rest of the night.

When the boys turned in late that night Sam expressed the same conviction to Joe, which he had already confided to the officer, and the young fellow agreed with him.

"I am confident of it," repeated Sam, "and it behooves us to keep a sharp lookout for this man."

"I wish we had a better description of the other rascal," added Joe. "For he might be right amongst us, and getting wind of all our plans, keep Paget on his guard."

The next day Sam made every endeavor to discover the hiding-places of the fugitives and their captive, but although he noticed many suspicious movements upon the part of the captain, he could detect nothing.

He and Joe listened for sounds of voices in the captain's cabin, having their suspicions that the rascals might be hidden there, but not a sound could they hear other than the captain's own voice; and watch him as they

would, they could never catch him in conversation with any one but the regular inmates of the vessel.

Ten days had passed, and Para was but a day's journey or a little more distance from them, the steamer making good headway, and the night shining bright and glorious above them.

Sam and Joe were sitting on deck in the moonlight conversing upon general topics, the other passengers sitting or walking about, the officer of the watch strolling carelessly up and down upon the quarter-deck, and the captain standing upon the bridge trying to raise one of the coast lights.

Suddenly there came a dull, booming sound. The vessel seemed to quiver from stem to stern, there came a puff of smoke from the hatchways, and then, with his face blanched from fear, the chief fireman came rushing upon deck.

"The steamer is afire!"

The captain came down from the bridge, and at that moment the flames burst through the decks, and with a loud report the boilers exploded, making the vessel shiver from one end to the other, and literally tearing her sides apart.

The captain and first officer dove down; the cabin hatchway, and in a moment re appeared bearing something in their arms and accompanied by another man.

"To the boats!" yelled the captain, and in an instant a boat was lowered, when by the glare of the flames the two boys saw that it contained, in addition to the captain, his first officer and two seamen, the well-known forms of Dr. Paget and Paulina da Rimeros.

CHAPTER VIII.

"MAN a boat and pursue the villain!" cried Sam, hoarsely. "They must not escape us!"

He and Joe leaped to the rail and were about to lower a boat, when a dozen seamen sprang forward and attempted to take it from them.

"Back, on your lives!" yelled Sam, knocking one brawny fellow flat. "Let a single man of you dare to enter this boat, and I'll stretch him dead at my feet."

Pablo sprang at once to the assistance of the boys, and clearing a place, kept the crowd at bay while the boys lowered the boat and leaped in.

Then waiting until it had gone several boats-lengths away, he sprang overboard, and swimming with steady strokes, soon rejoined his companions, and was lifted in.

Three or four ladies sprang overboard, and these were drawn into the boat, which was then headed toward that occupied by the captain, the sailors who attempted to get in being beaten back.

There were boats enough for all that remained and time enough for them to be lowered.

Sam had taken the smallest boat of the lot, and it was already as full as safety would admit of, and knowing that it would be overturned if any more got aboard, he resolutely refused to allow a single individual to enter.

The flames were gaining frightful headway but presently there was found one man cool enough to take command, and under his directions the survivors were all got off in boats or life-rafts, and soon after that the steamer sank.

The sky soon became overcast, and Sam lost sight of the boat containing the captain, although he could still hear the sound of the oars as they beat the water with a steady stroke.

"Paulina!" he shouted, "have courage and I will save you yet."

"Thank Heaven!" cried a voice which Sam could not mistake; "I know that you will save—"

Then the voice ceased, and Joe muttered: "They have gagged her, the cowards. However, we are now sure of success, for we know we are on the right track."

They pulled in as nearly a straight line as they could determine, but after awhile Sam ceased to hear the sound of oars in front, and could only guess at his position.

They pulled all night, and in the morning found themselves some five miles from the coast.

They made a landing, and inquired of some fishermen if they had seen anything of another boat.

They had not, they said, but some men further down reported that three men and a lady had passed that place some two hours previ-

ous, and that a small sailing craft belonging to one of their number had been hired to take the party down to Para.

Sam, Joe and Pablo procured fleet horses and set out at full speed, hoping to reach Para ahead of Paget, and arrest him upon his arrival.

When they reached their destination, which was early in the afternoon, they found that the news of the burning of the steamer had preceded them.

Sam found the captain of the Rio Negro, and from him learned that nothing had been seen of Paget or the young lady, and that it was doubtful if they had arrived; that the men in the other boats had brought the news that the officer was still on the watch for the villain.

There was a small steamer bound up the river that afternoon, he said, and Sam went at once to the dock, but found that it had already started, but that it would stop at a plantation ten miles further up to take on passengers and freight.

"There is a chance that the rascal will go upon this steamer, and embark at this plantation," said Sam to his companions. "We must follow up every trail that seems to lead to him. To horse at once."

Pablo acted as guide, and away they went at a gallop, having procured fresh steeds and doing the distance in an hour.

What was their disgust upon reaching the plantation, to see the steamer in mid-stream, and upon her deck the rascally Paget himself.

He had thrown off all disguise and stood coolly smoking a corn-husk cigarette, and cooling himself with a palm-leaf fan.

One of the windows in the cabin, which was on deck, was suddenly thrown open and Paulina's face appeared, wearing a look of deep dejection.

Sam shouted, and at the sound of his voice she uttered a joyful exclamation and waved her lace handkerchief.

Paget suddenly left the deck, and at the next instant Paulina was dragged forcibly away, the window closed, and the blinds and curtains drawn so as to exclude all sight.

"We must pursue the fugitive," said Sam. "A fleet sailing vessel could overtake her even now."

"It will not be necessary for the young patrons to do that," said Pablo. "Yonder comes a sloop which seems as fleet as the wind."

Procuring a boat from the plantation, they pulled out into the stream, and twenty minutes later hailed the sloop and asked to be taken on board.

"I am going to run in here," said the master of the sloop. "I've a load to take on."

The boat was headed in shore, and in a few minutes the boys stood on deck, while Joe explained matters, the man understanding Portuguese only.

"My sloop sails like a bird," he said, "and I can catch yonder puffing monster as easily as a spider secures a fly. I need men, for I have but one good river man besides myself."

"You can call on us for all the assistance you want," replied Sam, "only catch up to that rascal."

"I will catch them never fear," said the captain, as he began superintending the loading of his vessel, hurrying up the slaves so as not to lose a moment.

By the time he was ready the steamer was out of sight behind a bend in the river, but spreading her sails the little sloop fairly flew over the muddy waters of the majestic river, and in ten minutes the steamer again hove in sight.

The captain crowded on all sail, and rapidly gained on the steamer, which soon disappeared once more, and was lost to sight for several minutes.

When next she appeared the boys saw a small sailing vessel just putting off, and a boat returning to the steamer itself.

"What does that mean?" said Joe, excitedly.

"A small trader delivering messages, beyond a doubt," answered the captain. "They frequently do it."

"Have you got a glass?" asked Sam abruptly of the trader.

"Yes."

The man produced a small spyglass from the cabin, and Sam, adjusting it to his eyes, looked long and earnestly at the other sailing vessel.

"If Paget is there he keeps himself well hid," he muttered.

"I am afraid he has taken the young lady aboard the trading vessel. Ha! she is running ahead of the steamer. By Jove, I am afraid she will beat us after all, if we do go like a bird."

"Who is that fellow?" asked Joe of the captain, pointing ahead of the other vessel.

"The Senorita, commanded by one Joaquin Mundy, a Portuguese Jew, and as big a rascal as ever trod a deck."

At that instant a lady was seen on the deck of the trader, whom they had no difficulty in recognizing as Paulina.

CHAPTER IX.

It was indeed Paulina, the rascally Paget having transferred her to the Senorita in order to defeat his pursuers, well knowing that the latter would soon overhaul the steamer, which was an old-fashioned, slow-going craft, making less speed than the swift-winged vessels of the native traders.

The fugitive rapidly gained upon its pursuer, but, although the likelihood of escape seemed very great, an unforeseen event was to take place which would put the two vessels upon a greater equality than before.

Night came on, and the skipper retired to rest, leaving an Indian boy at the helm, with instructions to awake him at midnight.

For nearly the whole extent of the great river there extends along either bank a flooded forest, miles in extent, in which there are large inland lakes, the water of which is sometimes lashed into a fury by the wind, and where a vessel might easily be wrecked in a moment by having the keel dash against some hidden tree-top.

The inundation is periodical, the water rising and falling at certain times, although in the depths of the flooded forest there are many places where the trees are always more or less under water, and where indeed they may be said to spring from it instead of the earth.

Fogs prevail at times in the flooded forest, and often the sun will be obscured for a whole day by the thick and almost impenetrable branches, which arch themselves overhead and make a perpetual night.

The Indian boy was perfectly competent to have taken the little sloop through the channel; but, being blessed with the indolence natural to the denizens of warm countries, and particularly to the Amazonian Indians, he cared more for rest than work. It happened, therefore, that after being an hour or so at his post, he became neglectful, and overcome by the drowsy influence of the air, soon fell asleep.

Paget, awakening from a short nap half an hour later, saw the boy asleep, and, looking ahead, saw two channels—one narrow, and the other broad and deep, as it seemed.

He quickly headed the vessel into the channel, and kept her in it for some time, the current seeming to take her along with no trouble.

The boy did not awake for some time, and seeing a man at the helm, said nothing, imagining that it was all right, until after a few minutes, when he happened to see who the man was.

Then he sprang up, and with a look of fear, glanced around him, and finally fell upon his knees and began muttering a string of very rapid and very incoherent prayers.

Paget, thinking that the lad was afraid of being punished for his negligence, tried to reassure him; and coming to a place where there were several channels, guided the little craft into the largest one, keeping in mid-stream.

The boy suddenly leaped to his feet, and running under the *tolda*, or covering of the little cabin, awoke the captain with loud cries.

In a few minutes every one aboard was talking and vociferating in the wildest manner, all at once, and evidently with no other aim than to make as much noise as possible.

"*Santa Maria!* we are lost in the *gapo!*" cried the skipper. "You pig, you chattering monkey, you thrice accursed idiot, you have left the channel, and you know it as well as you know the road to your stomach, you lazy glutton!"

"But, master, I did not do it," protested the lad. "I fell asleep but for an instant, and the *medico* went astray. It was not my—"

The captain struck him to the deck with his brawny fist and tried to find the real channel, from which they had sadly strayed,

discovering too quickly that the task was a well nigh impossible one.

The night grew dark and stormy, the wind swept mournfully through the tops of the flooded trees; the vessel, left to itself, drifted in amongst a tangled mass of what seemed to be underbrush, but which was in reality the top branches of a grove of giant trees, and here it came to a stop.

It was too dark for them to see where they were, and it was resolved not to stir until morning, as it was clear that nothing could be done until the approach of light.

Commendable as this plan was, it was not destined to be carried out, for after an hour's patient waiting a huge wave came suddenly bearing down upon them, and dislodging them, split the vessel in twain and scattered the fragments upon the waters.

The unfortunate young lady was thrown upon an uprooted trunk, together with Paget and the captain, and soon drifted away from the wreck.

Towards morning the captain suddenly saw lights ahead of him, and became filled with apprehension, knowing too well what they meant.

His utmost fears were realized, for the Indians in the tree-tops espied him quickly, and in a short time were swarming around in great numbers.

The captain fought desperately, which was the worst move he could have made, for happening to kill one of his adversaries, he was set upon by the others, and literally hacked to pieces.

Paget was wise enough to make no resistance, and he and Paulina were carried into the aerial village, and delivered into the custody of the chief.

Meanwhile, how had it fared with the other boat and its occupants?

Pablo was awake, and when the other trader took the wrong channel, he saw the mistake by the little light there was, and instantly gave chase, thinking that it was but a ruse upon the other's part, and that he would presently emerge, after waiting for the pursuer to pass.

Owing to the hopeless wandering of the fellow he could not follow his course, and accustomed as he was to the river he soon became lost himself, and realized that it would be next to impossible to get into the true channel again.

He aroused the captain and told him what had happened, but the latter accepted the situation quite philosophically, saying:

"We will find our way out in the morning. At any rate Mundy is lost as well, and I shall make the voyage ahead of him."

The same inundating wave which struck the *Senorita* came upon the pursuing vessel during the night, and the two boys became separated from their companion, who was well up forward on the vessel, while they were clear aft.

The boys were obliged to swim for it at once, being swept irresistibly by the huge mountain of water, and carried far away from the vessel.

When they were at last enabled to find a footing in one of the trees they shouted lustily, but without success, their cries being unanswered.

There was clearly nothing to be done but wait for morning, and so, securing themselves in the branches, they fell asleep, and never awoke until the sun was shining in their eyes.

The first thing they did was to look to their arms and ammunition, the latter fortunately being unharmed, and the former requiring but little attention.

There was fruit in abundance, and they made a hearty meal, after which they began to explore their surroundings, and endeavor, if possible, to find some trace of their companions of the voyage.

They seemed to have been cast upon a little island, or patch of high ground, which the waters had left high and dry, and, descending from their perch, they wandered about until they reached the limit of their place of refuge.

After walking up and down for some time they found that the waters were suddenly rising, and springing into a huge nut tree they awaited developments.

The force of the flood soon uprooted the tree, in the hollow trunk of which their subsequent enemy, the anaconda, had secreted himself.

Their further adventures have already been related, and now we come to the time when Paulina was suddenly caught up by the savage and borne off in his strong arms.

"To the rescue!" shouted Joe, scrambling up one of the trees which sustained the platform, next to that which had been Paulina's abode.

To his surprise he suddenly came upon Paget engaged in a terrible struggle with the Indian, Paulina herself having fainted from terror.

CHAPTER X.

To say that the young men were surprised at coming so suddenly upon Paget would have been putting it very mildly, for they were astonished beyond measure.

They had hardly caught sight of him, however, when he darted into another tree-top in pursuit of the giant Mura who carried Paulina away, and by that time, the flames having reached the platform upon which they were standing, they were forced to leave.

As Sam reached the next one he saw Paget struggling with the Indian, one hand grasping a keen knife and the other clutching the man's dusky throat.

Paulina lay helpless upon his arm, looking more beautiful than ever.

Then the Frenchman succeeded in plunging his knife in the Indian's throat, full to the hilt.

At that instant Sam was at his side, and catching him by the arm, cried in ringing tones:

"Villain! We meet at last. Surrender this prize to me."

The man threw the girl in front of him, and standing ready to jump or glide down, cried hoarsely:

"Fire at your peril! It is not me you hurt, but she whom you love."

Both young men rushed forward at this, and grasping the poor girl around the waist with one arm, the villain leaped from the platform, striking the water with a splash.

Sam was about to follow when he was seized from behind and dragged from the tree by a pair of strong, brown arms, and looking up hastily he realized that he was a prisoner in the hands of the Indians.

At the same moment the end of the platform upon which Joe was standing gave way, and he was precipitated swiftly into the water.

He presently came to the surface just astern of a canoe, and grasping the stern, attempted to pull himself in, when he saw that the occupants of the canoe were three stalwart Muras, armed with spears in addition to the sharp-bladed paddles.

He instantly ducked, at the same time giving the edge of the canoe a decided tilt, which had the effect of precipitating one of the men into the water, throwing a second into the bottom.

The third uttered an exclamation of surprise and turned upon the young man, who quickly dove out of sight and swam to some distance.

When he arose again, his head struck some hard substance, which he rightly judged to be one of the peraguas, and by the feeling, an empty one at that.

He dove again and came up right alongside, when finding that his surmise was correct and that the craft had no occupants, he pushed it through the water, guiding it in toward the trees, where there was the most shade.

There was now clearly nothing to be done but wait for the morning, and then endeavor to reconnoiter, and if possible rescue Sam from his cruel captors.

Getting into the canoe, he floated on quietly, and soothed by the motion and the solemn stillness, quiet having once more settled upon the aerial village, he soon fell into profound slumber, from which he did not awaken for hours.

He had dropped to sleep so gradually that he had not taken the precaution to moor his boat to one of the trees, and when he awoke and looked about him he found that the scene had entirely changed.

The palms had disappeared, and in their place was a thick mass of trees, the foliage forming a perfect network overhead, and the interlaced branches making a dense screen, through which the rays of the sun were filtered, as it were, falling into little patches upon the water.

Feeling hungry, he climbed into a syringa, from which he caught a glance of a lot of

monkey pots hanging from a neighboring nut-tree, and was about to cross over to it, when something better yet caught his eye.

This was nothing less than a nest of young parrots, as fat as butter, and Joe's mouth fairly watered as he saw them, knowing what a delicious meal they would make.

He put his hand into the nest, and drawing out a couple of the young birds, twisted their necks in a twinkling and suspended them to his belt.

Two more followed suit, and he was about to make a further foray, when he heard a sudden rustling, and two old birds flew at him, scratching him with their sharp talons and trying to pick out his eyes with their ugly beaks.

He beat them off with his arms, but their cries had attracted others to the spot, and in an instant he was assailed on all sides by the feathered enemies, the flapping of whose wings made a tremendous racket.

"*Caramba!* I must get out of this!" cried Joe, whose hands, face and arms were bleeding from the bites and scratches of the spiteful creatures, and taking a header, he left the unfriendly locality of the tree and disappeared beneath the water.

He arose close to the boat, which he secured to a branch hanging down close to the water, and then began to look around him for a weapon.

"I don't intend to let those sharp-clawed fellows monopolize that tree, by any means," he muttered. "They have drawn blood, and now I won't stop until I have every young one in the tree hanging at my belt."

With his knife he cut a stout club some three feet in length, trimming off the small twigs and cutting a notch in the smaller end to enable him to secure a better grasp.

Then, climbing once more into the branches of the syringa, he began an instant war upon the parrots, knocking them down as fast as he saw them.

Round and round flew the cudgel, and at every blow a parrot fell stunned into the water, either dead or badly hurt, there to be devoured by a huge creature whom Joe had not yet noticed.

Joe then went the round of the nests, wringing the necks of the paroquets and securing them to his girdle, until he had several dozens of the toothsome little fellows.

Then sitting astride of a stout limb, he began cleaning his birds, throwing the entrails into the water, and stringing the cleansed bodies together upon a stout cord made from a creeper or hanging vine, which he passed through an incision in the neck made by his knife.

He was engaged in this work when suddenly glancing down, he beheld what he had at first taken for a floating log making a snap at the entrails as they fell.

The idle log was a monstrous alligator, or *jacare*, and at sight of him Joe nearly fell from his perch.

CHAPTER XI.

POOR Sam, after he was dragged from the tree, was hurried away to a distant platform, and securely bound, placed in a hammock, was left to reflect upon his sudden change of fortune, while the Mura put out the fires.

This occupied some little time, and after the boat sent in pursuit of the other fugitives returned without having accomplished their purpose.

After a while the Indians inhabiting this particular shelter returned, and began making preparations for supper, or rather continuing them, having been interrupted in that operation by the advent of the boys.

Sam was left severely alone, no one offering him food nor even bestowing a look upon him, and he wondered if starvation was to be one of the means used to compass his death.

He grew weary at last, and finally, becoming drowsy, he closed his eyes and disposed himself for sleep, feeling sure that he would awake when Joe came to his assistance, as he did not doubt the young Brazilian would do.

And so Joe doubtless would have done, had he not himself fallen asleep, and drifted off he knew not whither, finding himself, when he awoke, in a difficulty second only to that in which Sam had been placed.

The young fellow slept on, it might have been two or three hours, when he was conscious of a strange dream, which seemed startlingly real.

He thought that some malignant demon had fastened its talons upon his heart and

was slowly drawing it out, the while its baleful eyes were fixed upon his own with a deadly fascination.

It seemed impossible to escape from the horrible thing, writhe and turn as he would, and he felt himself gradually yielding to its fearful influence and helplessly permitting it to finish its fiendish work.

Then a strong desire to live seemed to animate his breast, and with a convulsive start and a smothered cry for help he awoke.

Horror! It was reality after all, and not a dream.

A huge vampire bat or blood-sucker had fastened itself upon him and was literally drawing out his life, for the blood is the fountain of existence, and without it no one can live.

Suddenly he heard a whizzing sound, saw something flash through the air, and felt the uncanny creature, half bird, half rat and all fiend, loose his hold upon him.

Another whiz and the vampire fell from him, and whirling through the air, landed in the water with a splash.

Then a dark form arose between him and the light, and he saw it was a man, evidently an Indian, as far as the obscurity of the place would permit him to make out.

The man had evidently not come upon hostile intent, although he carried a knife, the gleam of which Sam could plainly see, for with a few quick passes he severed the young man's bonds and lifted him from the hammock.

At that moment one of the Muras turned uneasily in his sleep, and the dark-skinned stranger at once darted to the sleeper's side, and plunging the knife into the man's neck, nearly severed his head from his body.

Then catching Sam up in his arms, for the lad had nearly fainted from loss of blood, he descended with him by means of a ladder made of notches cut in the tree, to the water's edge, where there was a periagua in waiting.

Placing his burden in the bottom, the man made a signal to Sam to keep perfect silence, and then dipping his paddle with the least possible noise, made his way silently through the trees, looking back occasionally, and bending his head to catch the slightest suspicious sound.

With a finger upon his lips, still cautioning Sam to silence, he glided at length into the open lagoon, which he crossed, bearing his course towards a spot where there were none of the aerial dwellings, reaching which he skirted the edge of the palms until he had left them altogether.

"The young patron can speak now," said the strange creature, "as there is no further need for silence."

"What?" said Sam, in amazement.

"Pablo?"

"The same, young master," replied the old Brazilian, it being indeed he that had saved Sam. "I witnessed your capture and waited until a good time came to release you from these dogs."

"And Joe?"

"I lost sight of him, and I fear he has become bewildered in the forest, and will be unable to find his way back to us."

"What can you tell me of Paulina?" asked Sam, anxiously, hoping that Pablo would tell him good news, and yet fearing that there was no such pleasure in prospect.

"Alas! I have not seen my sweet young mistress," replied the old servitor. "I came upon this village just as you were fighting the inhabitants in their own homes. That was a daring thing to do."

Presently the old fellow paddled the canoe up to a shelving bank, got out, and assisting Sam to land, pulled the boat up out of reach of the current, and then lit a fire in a small open place in the center of the island.

The use of the fire was quickly seen, for while Pablo was lighting it, Sam felt several sharp stings upon his hands and face, and looking up saw a perfect swarm of mosquitoes hovering over him, the skirmishers every now and then darting down upon him, and drawing blood with their lance-like bills.

He brushed them away, and presently a cloud of thick smoke arose, which put the pests to flight at once.

The two comrades then lay down alongside the boat, and protected by the fire, passed the night in comparative comfort, although Sam still felt weak on account of his adventure with the bat.

In the morning he was awakened by a loud

chattering, and walking to one edge of the island, saw at once what it meant.

Just across the water stood a tall tree, and in the higher branches was gathered a perfect congregation of monkeys, all chattering like mad.

Suddenly he saw one perch upon the end of a stout limb, while another clutched him around the body and hung down over the water, a third clamoring down until he was also suspended, when half a dozen others slid down in the same way, forming a string of monkeys.

Others followed, until the line nearly reached the water, when it began to sway back and forth with great rapidity.

"I wonder what all that means?" muttered Sam, to himself.

"They are going to make a bridge," said a voice, and turning about, Sam saw old Pablo standing beside him, gazing at the strange sight.

CHAPTER XII.

THE string of monkeys swayed back and forth until it acquired such momentum that on the upward swing the end monkey was able to catch hold of a projecting limb, which he clutched tightly, thus forming a link from tree to tree, which extended right across the water.

The others began crossing over, the young ones clinging to the backs of their mothers, and the older ones chattering away, evidently giving orders for the different parties to cross.

A spirit of mischief came over Sam, and drawing one of his pistols, which by some oversight had not been taken from him, he fired at the monkey holding the central position in this odd bridge.

As bad luck would have it, he struck the creature in the back, causing him to fall and breaking the bridge in two, one end hanging upon either side of the bank.

He was laughing at the odd actions of the monkeys, when Pablo suddenly seized him and dragged him out of sight, saying:

"Caramba! Young patron, why did you do that? If they see us, we are lost!"

The chattering continued for some time, seeming at one while to be right above their heads, but at last it died away, and Pablo, looking out cautiously, reported that the monkeys had departed, and that the coast was clear.

They then continued their journey, stopping once on their way to make a meal of fruit, and presently they emerged into a broader channel, although the branches were about as thick overhead as before.

They floated along at a good rate for an hour or so, Sam keeping a lookout for friends and enemies alike, when he suddenly started, and cried:

"Hark! Do you hear that?"

Then both voyagers heard a shout, and a voice crying:

"Hallo! I'm in a hole; come and help me out!"

"It's Joe," cried Sam, "and in trouble. Let us go to his aid."

"That's a pleasant companion for a fellow to have," muttered Joe, as he steadied himself. "Suppose I had fallen. That pretty creature would have eaten me up in a twinkling."

The alligator seemed to be of the same opinion, for he watched Joe, as if expecting him to fall and furnish him with a better meal than the entrails of the parrots afforded.

Joe went on with his work, however, taking good care that he should not lose his balance, and every now and then glancing down at his hungry neighbor.

He finished dressing the birds, and, slinging them to his belt, began making his way from one tree to the other.

The *jacare* was watching him, however, and without seeming to move, kept always under the very spot where Joe was, so as to be sure to catch him if he fell.

"Confound your ugly skin!" cried Joe, petulantly, after he had traveled some little distance, and saw the alligator still following him; "can't I manage to lose you?"

At last he found himself at the very edge of the trees, looking out upon quite an expanse of water, the tree he was in being somewhat detached from the rest, so that he would be obliged to go back in order to continue his way.

As he was debating what to do, he caught

sight of a boat at some little distance, just emerging from a sort of canal among the trees, and in it were two persons.

Making a spyglass of his hands, he looked long and earnestly at the little party, and at last, settled in his mind that the two were Sam and old Pablo, although he was not so sure of the latter.

Then he gave the hail that Sam had heard, making a trumpet of his hands this time, and sending his voice as far as he could.

Sam heard him, and as soon as they reached more open water answered the hail.

Joe shouted again, and before long Sam saw him, saying to Pablo:

"What can he be doing perched up in that tree? Is he afraid to come down?"

"Let's ask him," said Sam, as they drew nearer, and then raising his voice, he called:

"Joe!"

"Well?"

"What is it?"

"Crocodile, *jacare*!"

"Paddle in towards the trees," said Pablo.

"We have gone far enough. I will dispose of this fellow very quickly."

Then throwing off all superfluous clothing, and attired only in short drawers reaching to the knees, Pablo sprang into the trees, and quickly made his way toward Joe with as little noise as possible.

When he reached the lad, he greeted him quietly, and then looking around, cut a stout club with his knife.

One end was knobbed and full of sharp points, and armed with this weapon, which was not more than two feet in length, the Brazilian began letting himself down right over where the huge reptile lay in waiting.

"You're not going to fight him in the water, are you?" was Joe's query.

"Yes, young patron, but not as you think."

When Pablo reached the lower branches, he suddenly dropped, landing right astride of the *jacare's* back, just above the swell of the shoulders.

In an instant he had inserted one hand in the hollow socket of one of the creature's eyes, and raising the other aloft, brought it down with great force.

The stout cudgel descended with a resounding thud upon the skull of the creature, cracking it as though it had been so much paper.

One more whack, and the reptile began to turn over upon his back, and sliding off, the Brazilian threw away his club, and seizing hold of a hanging vine, drew himself up into the tree.

Sam had brought the boat up by this time, and the meeting between the two boys was a most joyous one.

"I have not been idle, you see," said Joe, pointing to the belt of young parrots, "and I've got your breakfast for you."

Both boys told their adventures, while Pablo managed the canoe, and in a short time they came to a place where they could cook and eat their birds; Pablo lighting the fire by means of two dry pieces of wood, and Joe spitting the birds upon twigs and setting them around to roast over the flames.

The meal was an excellent one, and after it was finished they all embarked once more, taking the course which they thought would lead them back to the river, hoping that Paget would take the same.

Towards the middle of the afternoon they left the trees and entered a large inland lake, many miles in extent, the further shore being quite distant and only just discernible.

"The river!" cried Sam, joyously.

"Not so, young patron. There are many lakes like this in the *gapo*, some of them being much larger."

"Look!" cried Joe, suddenly. "There is another canoe yonder just emerging from the trees!"

"And by Heaven, that scoundrel, Paget, is in it!" cried Sam, in great excitement.

"Paulina, too, by all that's good!"

"After them!" cried Joe, and with one accord the boys dipped their paddles at the same instant and shot quickly out upon the broad surface of the lake in rapid pursuit, Paget springing to his paddle with all his strength.

CHAPTER XIII.

"PULL for all you are worth!" cried Sam.

"We are gaining on him."

"Cut off his retreat. Don't let him get back among the trees."

"Take the paddle, Pablo," cried Sam, there being but two, Joe's boat having been left moored to the tree when he first caught sight of the *jacare*.

The old Brazilian obeyed, and Sam, sitting well up forward, began loading his pistols.

"Now, then!" he said, in an undertone, "pull steady, and I will have a shot at this villain. We are gaining upon him. Pull steady and strong. We will overtake him yet, and if he resists, I have this," tapping his pistols.

"Be careful not to hit Paulina," said Joe.

"Trust me for that. Ah, the scoundrel has placed her between us and him, as if guessing my intentions."

"We can get on the other side."

"Yes, but keep in a straight line yet. We are gaining still."

The young lady saw her rescuers and would have sprang from the boat, had she been able to do so, but foreseeing that she might do this, even before he saw the pursuers, Paget had secured her so that this was impossible.

"It is useless for you to attempt to escape," cried Sam, "for we are gaining on you, and I shall fire if you don't stop."

"Lay me over on the right a bit," added Sam, softly.

As the boat veered off, leaving Paget exposed to Sam's shot, the young man motioned to Paulina to throw herself into the bottom of the boat, and as she obeyed he sent a shot whizzing after the rascally Frenchman, which passed through the crown of his hat.

He hissed out an oath, and plied his paddle more vigorously.

Sam urged his friends to their utmost, and as the canoe once more crept upon the other, he fired, muttering:

"Better luck this time, you villain!"

So he did have, indeed, the ball taking Paget in the leg, and causing him to drop his paddle and fall into the bottom of the canoe.

He was up in a moment, however, resting upon one foot, with his other knee pressed against the side, and appeared to be working desperately at something.

"Pull!" cried Sam. "We are almost up to him."

All at once they saw what Paget had been at, for he raised a light pole, made of some hard, tough wood, and planting it in the center of the *periagua*, ran a sail of woven grass to the top, holding the sheets in his hand, and trimming the sail according to the wind.

The rude sail filled at once, and away shot the canoe, leaving a foaming wake behind, while Paget laughed derisively, and shouted back:

"Ha! who win the lady now? Shoot and shoot again, if it will give you any plaisir. I haf won, *mon enfant*, and the lady is mine. *Adieu!*"

To this boastful speech Sam made answer by sending a bullet after the scoundrel, which cut a hole in the sail, but did no further damage.

Away flew the canoe bearing the Frenchman and his captive, every moment increasing the distance between it and the pursuers, who, though beaten, still plied their paddles manfully, hoping against hope, and resolving never to give up until they had exhausted all the means within their power.

After half an hour of steady work the breeze suddenly died out, and there was scarcely enough to fill the sails, the speed of the canoe materially decreasing.

Sam saw this, and by dividing the work of paddling between them they all managed to keep fresh, and therefore stood even a better chance than Paget with the lead he had, should he be forced to take to the paddle now.

The wind did not freshen again, but died out to a dead calm, while the air grew suddenly damp and heavy in feeling.

Night was coming on, the sun having already disappeared behind a bank of mist, although it was not yet below the horizon, it lacking still some minutes to sunset.

The haziness in the air increased rapidly, and with the going down of the sun a thick fog arose, which hung like a cloud all around them, obscuring everything, and rendering all objects within a few feet of them utterly indistinct.

Just before this, Paget had evidently become alarmed, and had taken to his paddle again, being not more than a third of a mile ahead—so near, in fact, that had not the fog

arose when it did, he must assuredly have been overtaken.

That was his safeguard, however, and although Sam and his companions paddled lustily, they were still some distance behind when the fog closed in around them and shut the other canoe from sight.

They kept on paddling, however, guided only by the sound of the other paddle as it struck the water; but at last the night came on, thick and black, and they were obliged to desist, the guiding sound having ceased, and nothing but the cold, clammy fog all about.

The hours passed on, and while Sam remained awake the others slept, Joe taking the watch at midnight, or what he supposed to be such, Sam having called him when he became too tired to keep awake.

When the day began to dawn Pablo was awakened, and remained on watch until the time of sunrise, although the great orb was not visible, the fog still hanging like a gray pall over the waters.

"How long do you suppose this miserable fog will last?" asked Sam of Joe, when they were once more under way.

Joe said nothing, but looked at Pablo, who answered:

"Perhaps a day and perhaps—"

"Much longer than that," added Joe, sentimentally. "My father has told me of fogs that lasted a week."

"They are not at all uncommon," interposed the Brazilian.

"Pleasant prospect, very," remarked Sam, dryly. "How long will our present stock of provisions last us?"

"Till to-night."

"And then—"

"We must find more, or—"

"Starve to death. Well, there is no use in worrying about it, I suppose. We can live for some days without food, and we can't drift upon this inland sea forever. The current will take us somewhere beyond a doubt."

This was consoling, to say the least, and animated by this feeling, the friends ceased to pull, and allowed themselves to drift along with the current, the fog lasting all day, and showing no signs of lifting.

The food did not hold out as long as Joe had thought, for the last meal was eaten in the early afternoon, Pablo and Sam going to sleep soon afterward.

Joe remained on watch, and in an hour or so he saw indications of the fog thickening, or at least he thought he did, a dark line extending in front of him for some distance.

He paid little attention to it, however, and was dropping off to sleep when he felt a shock, and, arousing himself, found that the canoe had stopped.

The cause of this was at once apparent, and he saw with delight that they had again touched the flooded forest, the canoe having drifted against a tree trunk.

CHAPTER XIV.

MOORING their craft, the wanderers scrambled into the tree-tops, where they presently found food in abundance, and of every variety, of which they partook heartily.

The fog continued, but now that they were in the trees they did not mind this, as there were many things that they could do to occupy both their hands and minds.

"The first thing, young patrons, is to have a sail," said Pablo, when they had satisfied their appetites, "and right here is where we can get it."

"And a full rigged ship, too, I suppose?" said Sam, laughing, the idea of finding material for sails in the woods being a novel one.

The old man said nothing, but busied himself in hunting around until dark, Sam noticing that he had a bundle of something under his arm, which he deposited in the bottom of the boat.

The next day he sent Sam and Joe off to hunt for a *syringa*, telling them to collect all the sap they could, using the monkey pots to hold it, and while they went one way, he went another, though he said nothing concerning his intentions.

The boys returned at night with several pots full of the sap, which had hardened into a white, glutinous mass, looking like thick cream, which they deposited in the boat where Pablo was engaged beating something with a flat stone from the bottom.

The fog lasted a week, and during this time Pablo usually remained in the vicinity of the boat, the young men making several

expeditions in search of things he wanted, such as creepers, long, sharp thorns which grew upon a peculiar kind of bush, monkey pots, straight sticks and other articles, the use of which he would not tell.

One afternoon when the boys returned in great haste, the fog having lifted and the sun beginning to break through the clouds, they were very much surprised at seeing what they took to be a strange boat, carrying a sail of considerable dimensions.

Pablo was in the boat, but they saw no one else, and wondered where the strangers to whom it belonged had betaken themselves.

"Where did you find the canoe?" asked Joe, sliding down a vine into the boat.

"I did not find it, young patron. It is the same we have had all the time."

"But the sail?"

"Belongs to us, young patron."

"Did you find it in the boat, stowed away somewhere?" was Sam's query.

"No, I made it."

"How did you make it?"

Pablo then explained that he had found several trees, the fiber of which, when beaten into a pulp, made a coarse, strong paper of a grayish color, very similar in texture to that of which the nests of wasps are made.

He had collected a quantity of this fiber, and moistening it, had reduced it to a pulp, which he had beaten and rubbed between two flat stones, mixing the caoutchouc from the *syringa* in with the pulp, giving it strength and imperviousness to water at the same time.

He made several breadths of this paper, about a foot in width, and when he had enough to form a good-sized sail, glued them firmly together with the caoutchouc, and then doubling the lower edges over a long, straight pole, securing them with bent thongs, and further fastening them down with a coating of rubber.

The upper yard was stronger and of greater length, the mast being a stout pole cut in the forest and lashed firmly to the upper yard by creepers, which were rendered stronger yet by a glaze of the *syringa* sap.

The mast was wedged firmly in the bottom of the boat with stones and a composition of mud and rubber baked together, the sheets of sail ropes being formed of twisted *sipos* or creepers plaited together into a stout cord, and the sail itself when put together, being covered on both sides with a thin coating of rubber.

The next morning the party set sail, having laid in a supply of provisions sufficient to last them several days, and having taken their bearings by the sun, laid their course in a direction which they judged would take them toward the river.

The further shore of the lagoon was quite distant, but in the afternoon they made it, and skirted along a few miles until they came to a broad passage, which they entered and followed to some distance, when Joe suddenly exclaimed:

"Do you see those marks on the trees, Pablo, where the bark has been cut away?"

"I have been noticing them for some time."

"Do you know what they mean?"

"Does the young patron know?"

"We are in the *gapo* once more?"

"Assuredly."

"And this is one of the regular routes of travel through it!" cried Sam. "We have but to follow these blaze marks and we cannot be astray."

"You have it," answered Joe. "We have been mighty fortunate, I think, to reach the river so soon."

"We have not reached it yet," replied Pablo, quietly. "We are merely in one of the channels leading to it. It may be days before we see the Amazon itself."

The course was plainly marked, however, and by traveling only during the day they were in no danger of straying away again.

Pablo had constructed a covering or *tolda* over the forward part of the canoe, and here they slept, being protected from the sun by day, and the forest damps by night, one usually remaining outside while the others were under cover.

At last one forenoon they suddenly glided out into a broad majestic stream having a rapid current, and a light yellowish color, the waters dancing in the sunlight, and the breeze blowing freshly through the trees, bearing a sweet perfume from the flooded forest.

Sam was at the helm, and immediately calling his comrades he said joyously:

"What is this?"

"*El rio!*" said Pablo, quietly.

"The river of rivers!" shouted Joe, "the mighty Amazon."

Pablo took the helm and guided the canoe, Sam watching him a few minutes, and then saying in a tone of surprise:

"You are going up?"

"Yes. We shall not see Para for many months."

"Where are you going?"

"To the mouth of the Mадiona, and thence to Principe de Beiro and the diamond fields."

"But Paulina? You will not desert—"

"We shall find her, for this villain's greed will guide him as surely as the hand of Providence has guided us!"

CHAPTER XV.

THEY were out of the gapo at last, the scene of so many exciting adventures, and once more upon the broad waterway from which they had strayed, and which they would now be careful to follow, having had a sufficiency of the flooded forest.

That same day, late in the afternoon, they saw a sail approaching, bound up the river, and hailing the coming vessel, which was a small schooner of about forty tons, they were taken aboard and their little craft allowed to float away.

The schooner was bound for the Madeira river with a cargo of supplies for the fort.

The three adventurers had no difficulty in obtaining a passage as far as the schooner went, and even in getting a loan from the skipper, Joe's father being well known, and the mere mention of his name sufficient guarantee for all the money he cared to ask for.

They took particular pains not to say anything regarding the diamonds, as there was a party of adventurers on board who were themselves bound for Matto Grosso, and it would not do to give them an inkling of that part of their errand.

One of these men, who was called Ruy da Gutierrez, and was an acknowledged miner, questioned the boys very closely, asking them where they expected to find the young lady, and what reason there was for thinking that her abductor had taken her up the river instead of to Para.

"He was bound up stream when we last saw him," answered Sam, "and that is why I think he will continue in that direction. I cannot, of course, know his reason for going up, and all we have to do is to follow until we overtake him."

"I am afraid you won't succeed," said Da Gutierrez, with a slight sneer. "He probably knows his way much better than you do, and is doubtless back in Para by this time. His going up the river was evidently a mere blind."

"You seem to be intimately acquainted with the habits and character of the rascal," interposed Joe, quickly. "Perhaps he is a friend of yours, or, at least, if not a friend, an acquaintance."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded the man, angrily, of Sam, who had spoken so pointedly.

"Nothing; I speak merely upon general principles."

"What do you know of my companions?"

"I merely draw inferences from your own words," was the cool reply; "that is all."

The fellow saw clearly that nothing was to be made out of the young American, and he betook himself to another part of the boat, while Joe said, cautiously:

"There is something here which we do not thoroughly understand. We must keep an eye on this worthy."

"So far from not understanding him, Joe, I can see through him as clearly as though he had told us all his secrets."

"And what do you see?"

"That he is known to Paget; nay, more, that he is the villain's friend, if not his accomplice."

"Impossible!"

"Not at all. They did not both leave Para. This fellow, hearing of the wreck of the Senorita, for the news must have reached Para by this time, sets out for Matto Grosso to get the diamonds, while Paget returns with Paulina."

"But he does not know the place where they are hidden."

"Could not Paget have confided it to him? There were two accomplices at first, and why should there not be two now?"

"Why did not Paget go alone up the river as he intended to do at first?"

"Probably because he had not time to do so. The two may have been separated at the time of the destruction of the Capitan, and Paget, knowing that we were in Para looking for him, and being without his friend, set off alone."

"What you say is very reasonable, and makes it more imperative than ever that we should keep a watch upon this man."

"And, above all, avoid him," interposed Pablo, "particularly at night. The daggers of such men as he are unusually sharp and ever ready to dart from their sheaths."

"He will go overboard if I see any signs of nonsense upon his part," answered Sam, firmly. "We must get the start of him when we reach shore and not let him discover whither we are going."

Sam had said nothing about Paget's having taken the name of Dubourg, and one day at dinner, Gutierrez, while telling a story of some Frenchman, for he was full of anecdotes, mentioned Dubourg as being the name of one of them.

"Was it Claude Dubourg of Paris?" asked Sam, suddenly. "This Dr. Paget I told you of had a friend of that name, I believe."

The man turned livid, and darting a glance of the most fiendish hate upon the young man, was about to reply angrily, when he checked himself and said:

"My acquaintances are of a different class from yours, senior. You have evidently a monopoly of the rogues and impostors in your friends."

"That settles it," thought Sam. "He does know him, and is well aware of his assuming the name of Dubourg. I shall leave him alone now, for I know all I care to."

"You must be careful, young patron," said Pablo, after dinner as they sat upon deck in the shade, smoking their cigarettes. "You must not anger the man too much, or you will arouse all the devil in him."

"I don't care if there are a hundred of them!"

"Take care, for you may be like the man in the Eastern tale who released a cruel spirit from a mere vial, and was then totally unable to subdue him and was destroyed."

"The cases are similar in one respect," laughed Sam. "The devil is all gas and nothing else. I am not afraid of Senor da Gutierrez."

Nothing more was said, and the following night was a stormy one, the waters of the mighty river being lashed into fury by the wind which blew a perfect hurricane, the vessel scudding along under double reefs, and no one remaining on deck but the crew, the poor fellows calling upon their patron saints in their terror and being rendered utterly useless by fright.

Sam went on deck in the thick darkness to see if he could be of any use, when, as the vessel gave a sudden lurch, he felt himself lifted from his feet, and at the next moment went flying through space right over the boiling waters.

He gave one shriek for help, but there was no answer, and the vessel dashed on, leaving him alone in the angry waters of the mighty river.

CHAPTER XVI.

"WHERE has Sam gone?" asked Joe, a few minutes after his friend had gone on deck.

"To look at the weather, I suppose."

"I am afraid something may have happened, particularly as that fellow Gutierrez is not here. I am going to look for him."

As Joe passed out of the cabin he met the man just entering, and said to him:

"Have you seen my friend?"

"I have not."

When he reached the deck he could scarcely stand, but, seeing the captain close by, asked him if he had seen Sam.

The captain replied that he had not, and Joe returned to the cabin, thinking that perhaps Sam might have returned by this time.

There was no Sam, however, old Pablo having searched thoroughly during Joe's absence.

"What do you think?" asked the young man.

"I am afraid that the young patron has fallen overboard in the dark."

"There are two things certain," said Joe.

"One is that Sam went outside, and the other that Gutierrez was out then, and must have seen him. He is Paget's friend, and I think

he pushed him over, and I will charge him with it."

"Be cautious, young patron. It will not do to arouse the sleeping devil in the man. Watch him carefully, but seem to be his friend. You may accomplish more in that way than by open violence."

"*Cospita!* He may challenge me if he likes. I can handle a sword or a pistol with any man in Brazil, and do not fear this braggart."

"No, no, you must not imperil your life, for remember, my young mistress is yet to be rescued from the power of the false-hearted *medico*."

Meantime, how was Sam faring in the yeast of waters where he had been hurled by the treacherous miner, the supposed accomplice of Paget?

He had sunk to a great depth at first, and when he arose to the surface the little vessel was far away, her lights just glimmering in the black darkness.

The huge waves swept over him, and he knew that he could not swim in such a flood.

He was about to dive down beneath the waves, where there would be less agitation, and where he might manage to approach nearer the shore, when he struck his hand against some large object floating in the water.

He threw out his arm and discovered that the object floating was a log or tree cast adrift upon the river.

Supporting himself upon it, he allowed himself to be carried away whither the wind and waves cared to take him, holding on firmly by both hands and allowing his body to float.

After an hour or so he managed to get astride of the log or tree, the water being considerably less agitated than before, and in this manner he floated on for some hours, until his odd raft suddenly came to a stop.

He dropped over the side to see if he had reached the shore, but sank at once over his head, which convinced him that he had floated against a submerged tree or some drifting object larger than that upon which he had found a refuge.

There was nothing to be done but wait until daylight, and getting astride of the log he supported himself in as easy a position as he could until the coming of day.

By and bye his head fell upon his breast, his muscles relaxed, and he lay at length upon the log, fast asleep, his legs trailing in the water, and his arms folded under him.

He was so exhausted that, notwithstanding his cramped position, he slept soundly until awakened by the singing of the birds, and when he looked up he at first did not know where he was.

He took a philosophical view of the matter, though, for, after having made a general inspection of his surroundings, he said, lightly:

"Well, here I am again among the tree-tops, and all alone, monarch of the woods and lord of the forest. At any rate, it's better than tossing about upon the open river, with every chance of being drowned. I think I had better stretch my legs a bit, and look for my breakfast."

Leaving the tree-trunk on which he had been floating, he scrambled into the branches, which hung thick about him, and in a short time satisfied his appetite, after which he sat in the sun until his clothes were dry, when he began to think what had best be his future course.

The first thing to do, of course, would be to make his way to the open river.

When he reached the river, if he did, he would have to keep a watch for vessels going up, and endeavor to get a passage on one, provided they would stop for him.

Joe would be certain to wait at the mouth of the Madeira, and institute inquiries there; and Sam determined to go there as soon as he found the river, provided he could do so.

Taking his bearings by the sun, he started out on his aerial journey, making his way from tree to tree with rapidity, going around when it became necessary, and maintaining as straight a course as the circumstances warranted.

Sitting astride of a huge limb, he took his revolver from his belt and gave it a thorough overhauling, examining his cartridges to see that they were in good condition, after which, the weapon being in good shape, he scoured the neighborhood for food, took a short nap on a secure place upon a tree-top, and then once more started off upon his journey.

At the end of an hour's time he came to a large, open place among the trees, and at once began skirting it in order to reach the other side.

He had traveled for some little distance when he espied a canoe floating loose apparently in the current, and he hurried forward for the purpose of appropriating it to his own use.

He reached it, and slipping down the trunk, dropped lightly in and took up the paddle, congratulating himself upon his success.

Suddenly, however, the woods resounded with shouts, canoes shot out from all sides beneath the thick shade, and in an instant the young fellow found himself surrounded by a large party of Indians, who menaced him with black looks.

Then he was seized, dragged from the canoe, and the whole fleet set off at once through the water, the prisoner being seated in the leading boat between two plumed and painted savages.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE Indians who had captured Sam were a part of the famous Chiquitos of the Madeira region, this particular party then being upon an expedition against one of the rival tribes.

Sam sat quietly in the boat, paying no particular attention to what went on around him, and after awhile the Indians relaxed their vigilance somewhat.

They continued to row steadily all the afternoon, coming at last to solid ground again, when they disembarked, some carrying the canoe on their backs and others going ahead as scouts.

There were plenty of birds flying about, and in the underbrush the lad noticed several animals, and when the party began its march Sam determined to put into action a plan which he had formed.

Suddenly darting out into a small open space, he clapped his hands, stamped one foot, and appeared to be gazing earnestly into the sky above him.

Then he whipped out his revolver and fired rapidly, six times in succession, into the air, at the same time uttering strange guttural cries.

Four or five birds fell dead at his feet, and as the savages, alarmed at the unaccustomed sound, gathered about him with trembling limbs and scared faces, he quickly reloaded his weapon, and pointing to a parrot on the wing, fired and brought it down—dead.

He pointed his hand seemingly at a monkey that was watching his movements; there was a flash, and the creature fell lifeless upon the ground.

The Indians examined the birds, and finding them dead, gazed with astonishment upon the young man before them, whom they began to regard with feelings of awe, many making obeisances before him.

Sam quickly concealed his weapon, and folding his arms across his chest stood proudly erect with his head thrown back, his eyes flashing, and a look of lofty superiority upon his handsome countenance.

"It is a young god of the whites," said one of the Indians, evidently high in authority.

"He holds life and death in his hands," said another. "He points his finger and a living thing perishes. He is a god."

"Let us make him our chief," said a third. "When we march upon our hated enemies, he has but to wave his hand and they will fall dead."

Sam did not understand the words, but he knew by the actions of the savages that they regarded him as a most wonderful being, and were ready to load him with all honors.

They crowned him with a rich head-dress of feathers, hung chains of beads intermingled with lumps of gold around his neck, put gold rings upon his arms and legs, and a costly girdle of gold and jewels about his waist, and, lastly, presented him with a short mantle of red cloth, exquisitely embroidered with feathers and gayly-colored threads.

They placed him upon an elevation, and while some prepared and set before him the choicest food, others erected a canopy of gayly-colored matting over his head, while still others made music for him while he ate, the great body of the savages standing at a respectful distance, all those who approached, except to serve him, falling upon their faces, and paying him the most abject homage.

They covered his body with perfumed oil,

they painted his legs and arms with bright colors, they adorned him with all the magnificence that they could command, and at last the high chief of all, throwing a costly gold and jeweled chain around his neck, took him in his arms, embraced him, kissed him on both cheeks, and then fell prostrate, as if entreating for his favor.

"These fellows evidently take me for a god, or some great chief," thought Sam. "Well, this is in my favor, for I shall be able to find my way back at last to my friends. I wish I knew their confounded lingo, though."

Then he took the chief by the hand, and raising him up, smiled graciously, and said:

"Where go?"

The man understood, and answered in mixed Portuguese and Indian:

"To the river Madeira to fight our enemies. The young white god shall lead us to victory."

Sam understood this mixed dialect better than he did the pure tongue of the Chiquitos, and he answered in Portuguese, extending his arms in benediction over their heads.

"It is well. The young white spirit"—he could not say God, it seemed so presumptuous—"will lead his children against their foes and sweep them from the earth!"

"Good!" shouted they all.

"To what part of the great river do my children wish to go?" asked Sam. "It is the pleasure of the white spirit to visit the rapids of Riberimo and the diamond fields of Matto Grosso."

"It is well," said the chief. "When we have conquered our enemies we will go whither the young white god pleases."

"They are bound to get me into a fight," thought Sam. "Well, I shall have to submit, I suppose."

Then attacking the food he made a hearty meal, and lighting a corn-husk cigarette, of which he had a number in his pockets, he puffed away for a while, blowing the smoke in great clouds around him, and finally said:

"The white chief would sleep."

The chiefs swung a hammock under the trees, and here Sam dropped to sleep after finishing his smoke, being attended all the night by the devoted Indians, who kept off the flies and mosquitoes, a service for which Sam was duly grateful.

Despite his odd situation, the boy soon fell asleep, and passed a very refreshing night, awakening before sunrise in the morning, and examining the state of his ammunition unseen by the savages.

He found that he had cartridges enough for three or four rounds besides what was already in the weapon, which was better than it might be, though he determined to let the Indians fight as much as possible, and not waste any bullets which he might find of invaluable assistance to him later on.

His breakfast was served to him by the principal warriors, and then, borne upon the shoulders of the leaders, he set out upon his warlike expedition with no little anxiety as regarded the ultimate result, upon which his own safety so greatly depended.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE force of the Indians gained in numbers as the march proceeded, for it had gone forth that a white god had been pleased to assist them, and numerous reinforcements joined the party during the morning, so that by the middle of the forenoon there were fully five hundred of the war-like fellows in line.

Shortly before noon some of the scouts came in and reported that a large force of the hostile Indians was encamped about half a mile ahead of them, unsuspecting an attack.

When Sam was told of this, he ordered that the party be divided into four divisions, and that a dozen men should accompany him to take his instructions.

The four parties were to approach the hostile *Mollocca* from different directions, and one at a time rush in upon it as soon as they should hear his thunders, as they called the noise of his pistol.

The men were told off into parties, and Sam went ahead cautiously, accompanied by his body-guard, keeping themselves well hid and making as little noise as possible.

In this manner they reached the spot where the Indians were gathered outside of their camp, totally unsuspecting of the approach of strangers.

Springing into a tree, Sam suddenly made his appearance right in the midst of the

startled savages, and with a yell gave the signal for his men to follow.

He was surrounded at once by the enemy, and one brawny fellow rushed upon him with brandished club, ready to dash his brains out.

Whipping out his revolver, Sam fired point blank at the savage and brought him to his feet in an instant.

Quickly emptying the remaining chambers among the savages, he struck down one of his assailants, thus clearing a passage for himself, but at this moment the Chiquitos charged in four parties, and the surprised Indians sought at once to defend themselves.

The onslaught was so sudden and so terrible, however, that they did not have time to retreat to their fortress, but were cut down by the merciless Chiquitos in great numbers.

Sam danced and capered around, discharging a shot now and then, when the savages made it actually necessary, though not unless.

The Indians, thinking that some great spirit had descended from the heavens to aid the Chiquitos, became disheartened by the terrible slaughter that was taking place in their midst, and they presently broke and fled in all directions, pursued by their relentless enemies.

The Indians were soon utterly routed, and the Chiquitos returned laden with spoil and captives, and hailing Sam with shouts of triumph.

He was placed in a sort of covered palanquin raised upon the shoulders of half a dozen sturdy Chiquitos, and in this manner borne through the forest until night overtook them.

The next day Sam repeated his wish to go to the mouth of the Madeira, and the Chiquitos accordingly laid their course in that direction, reaching it in two days, when they set out for the mountains, Sam having warned his guides to keep a lookout for a party of whites, and to offer them no molestation, but let him know about them at once.

For the present, therefore, we will leave him, and follow the fortunes of Joe, who was determined to discover whether Gutierrez had actually pushed Sam overboard or not, and punish him for it.

In the morning Sam was missed, and the captain expressed great surprise and sorrow when Joe told him that he feared his friend had fallen overboard.

Gutierrez said nothing, but Joe, watching his face carefully, himself being unobserved, saw an expression of triumph cross it which convinced him that his supposition must be correct.

Night came, and while Gutierrez was walking up and down on deck, Joe stole up to him and heard him say:

"That young scamp is out of the way, at all events, and if I can find a means of getting rid of the other and the old man, I shall be entirely safe."

"So, so; that's just what I wished to know," muttered Joe to himself, as the man walked away. "If he wants an opportunity of trying to get rid of me, I will give it to him, though I shall not promise him to be an easy victim."

He waited until the man came up, and then said, suddenly:

"Not so bad a night as the last, senor?"

"No," answered the man, shortly.

"Not so easy to push one into the water, either?"

"What shall I imply from your words, senor?"

"Anything you like, but keep your distance," said Joe, retreating from the rail. "You might throw me over before I knew it."

"Per Dios, do you accuse—"

"Accuse you of throwing my comrade into the water? Yes, I do; and you would like to do the same to me, villain!"

"Per Dios, this is language that I—"

"You don't like it. I should think not. Cowards and poltroons do not like to be called such. You and your friend Paget, or Dubourg, are very sensitive on that point."

"Santa Maria, but this is too much!" roared the man, rushing at Joe with the evident intention of throwing him overboard.

Joe dodged and struck the man a blow in the face, which caused the blood to flow freely.

At this moment the captain and some of the passengers approached, and Gutierrez, seeing that there would be no opportunity to resort to foul play, said hotly:

"Sir, if you were a gentleman I would demand satisfaction for this insult."

"You can have all and more than you wish. These gentlemen will tell you how and what I am, which is more than you can do for yourself, I take it."

At this added insult the man flushed deeply, and fairly hissed:

"I do not fight unknown boys!"

"Because you dare not! You are a coward! I am Jose da Loanda, and have as good blood in my veins as any man in Brazil, not even excepting the emperor himself. I am on nameless vagabond, compelled to travel under an alias to escape the penalty of my crimes."

"Will you fight?" demanded Gutierrez, fiercely, seeing that there was no escape, and that he must either challenge the plucky lad, or be branded as a coward.

"I will punish you for your villainy," replied Joe, "though I know I lower myself by fighting with such a wretch."

"Then choose your sword, and prepare at once for death."

"Pardon me," said the captain coming forward, "but as the young senior is the challenged party, he has a right to choose his own time and place as well as weapons."

"I choose the most convenient place after we reach the shore," said Joe, "and will take pistols at ten paces."

Gutierrez turned pale, but assented to the proposition, and soon after this retired to his room, whence he did not emerge again that night.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE next day after this, the vessel reached the mouth of the Madeira River, and at once proceeded up it, the Ribeirao Falls being a considerable distance, there being other rapids to pass before these would be reached.

There was no news of Sam, and Jose concluded to push on as far as Matto Grosso with Pablo, in order to intercept Paget should he endeavor to reach them first.

After journeying a week on the river, the captain announced one afternoon that he would land the next day and transport a part of his cargo on mules and in small boats, and that as soon as they landed the two contestants could have their fight out.

In the morning, however, when Joe and Pablo went ashore nothing was seen of Gutierrez, and a long search resulted in nothing, no trace of him being found.

Then one of the crew said that a man had left the vessel just before morning in a small boat which had come alongside, and had landed upon the left bank of the river.

"The coward has run away," said Joe, excitedly. "I might have known it."

"Let us continue along the bank," said Pablo. "He may be waiting for us further on."

"I fear not. However, we can do so, for I am glad to stretch my legs again on shore."

In a few days they reached the San Antonio Falls, where the vessel was to turn back, the balance of the goods being carried up the rapids in boats, or along the bank on the backs of mules.

Long, tough ropes, made of bark, were procured, one end being fastened to a boat, while the other was carried along the shore by Indians, other Indians remaining in the boats to keep them from the rocks.

The current was very strong, and rushed and eddied about among the black rocks with fearful force, the depth of the water being very slight at some points and at others several feet.

At some points the Indians would get out, and standing on the rocks, keep the boats away by means of long poles, and, by springing from rock to rock, keep alongside, and occasionally take a turn at the tow-lines.

Joe remained in sight of the boats, as he thought there was more chance of meeting his man on the river banks than in the woods.

At length, after much trouble and actual hardship, a whole day being occupied in the task, the falls were passed, and the whole party embarked once more in the boats, the mules being taken charge of by the leader of the *tapiños*, and the tedious journey continued.

"Think of poor Paulina being obliged to make this terrible trip alone with that villain," said Joe; "he will have a long account to settle with me when next we met, I can promise him."

"My old blood fairly boils in my veins when I think of it," returned Pablo, "but are we sure he will take her with him?"

"He would not leave her, for there is no one to trust. He will desire, of course, to keep her with him until he has secured the treasure."

"But one would think that he would be satisfied with the possession of the young lady and let the other go."

"Some men would be, to be sure, but this villain's rapacity is insatiable. Did he not say to his accomplice that he was determined to possess both treasures? Then he is so distrustful that he will not let her out of his sight or permit any one else to take charge of her."

"But if he should meet this Gutierrez?"

"I believe he is as bad as Paget himself, and that, thinking the latter lost, he will try to recover the diamonds himself."

"But he does not know where they are hidden."

"He may have obtained the information from Paget in some manner, probably by underhand means. That is why we must try and find him."

"Let us hope we shall meet them both there and punish them according to their deserts."

"They will get them; never fear."

Another week passed, for it is tedious journeying in the valley of the Amazon, and nothing is done in a hurry, and the Ribeirao Falls were approaching, where another debarkation would be necessary.

These rapids are two miles in length, and are very dangerous, the current being swift and strong, the river lined with sunken rocks and the passage a most dangerous one.

Traders have been known to be fully a month in transporting their boats through the woods these two miles, but there were excellent guides in this case, the boats were smaller and the time occupied in the portage would be vastly less, probably not more than two days at the outside.

Joe and Pablo stuck to the miners and rendered valuable assistance to the men in charge of the mules, as well as those having the boats, which were now carried up over large rollers.

Toward the close of the second day, when the task was nearly completed, some of the men in advance came in and reported that they had seen signs of Chiquito Indians, and that they feared that a large war party was in the neighborhood, from whom they might anticipate trouble.

They were in hopes of getting upon the river again, however, before meeting the Indians, and in that case would have less to fear from them.

Night was approaching when the last stage of the journey was made, and one or two of the boats had already been launched, Joe and Pablo being seated in one, when there came a sudden cry:

"The Chiquitos! We are attacked! To the boats—to the boats!"

Almost instantly a large party of armed Indians appeared on the bank, and a shower of arrows flew toward the boats.

The helmsman of Joe's boat was struck, and, falling into the water, the little craft was at once at the mercy of the current.

"We are lost!" cried the young fellow, as the boat swept down toward the rapids, carried with irresistible force.

"Sit still," said Pablo, "and trust to Heaven to spare us. We are in the hands of fate, and can do nothing!"

CHAPTER XX.

LET us return for awhile to Paget and Paulina, whom we left in the submerged forest, pursued by Joe and Sam after the fight with the Indians, and the subsequent coming on of the fog upon the lagoon.

Like the pursuers, Paget was caught by the thick vapor which fell like a gray pall over everything; but unlike them, he succeeded in reaching the trees again, and found a waterway, and better yet, a trading vessel, while they were still wandering about in the woods.

The poor girl had no chance of making any one acquainted with her sorrows and appealing for aid, as Paget shut her up in his room, representing to the captain that she was insane and very violent, needing constant watching to prevent her from destroying herself.

He carried all her meals to her himself, and let no opportunity slip for pressing his suit, telling her that her young lover was dead, and that she had nothing to hope for except she consented to be his.

She resisted all his advances with scorn, praying him repeatedly to release and send her back to her uncle, promising to protect him from the latter's wrath, and assuring him that he should go unpunished if she were only set free.

Paget remained obdurate, however, and continued his persecutions until the poor girl was driven nearly frantic.

The fatigue and exposure had told terribly upon her health and strength, so that she looked almost ready to drop into the grave, the mental strain being worse than the mere physical discomforts which she was obliged to undergo.

When the mouth of the Madeira was reached, Paget hired a boat to take him up to Matto Grosso, employing three or four Indians to do the work.

While on his way he met Gutierrez, who told him that Joe was upon his track, but that Sam had been disposed of, and that if they made haste they would have nothing to fear.

The man was pleased at this information, and asked how Sam had guessed his errand.

"I don't know," replied the other. "I suppose I must have acted suspiciously when I first saw him. He did not recognize me, of course, because I did not appear upon the Capitan, being, as you know, secured in the hold with you."

"Aha, the captain arranged that well. That shows the value of a bribe. Had you not been so careless and set fire to the steamer, we would have escaped much easier than we did."

"It is all right now, though, for one of the lads is dead and the other will not catch us when we get this treasure. We must return by way of the passes to Rio, and then take the first steamer to some English port."

"Yes, for it will not do to run the risk of being found in Para again. There is danger in Rio, of course, but not so much as if we were to return to Para by way of the river."

"Oh, no, that is not to be thought of."

Paulina was more comfortable now than she had been in some time, and having learned that Joe was still alive, had great hope of being ultimately rescued.

She would not believe that Sam was dead, but persisted in telling herself that she knew he was yet alive, and would appear when least expected.

The trip up the river was a slow one, as the two villains were constantly on the lookout for their pursuers, and often lay hidden all day when any traders hove in sight, fearing that they might be the pursuing party.

The San Antonio Falls were passed in safety, but when the Ribeirao rapids were reached, Paget determined to go around them and keep on the right bank, the other party being on the left, as Gutierrez had told him.

Much time was lost in getting ready, and then one of the scouts gave warning of a large party of hostile Chiquitos just above them, and it was resolved to encamp on one of the small islands near the rapids and await the departure of the Indians.

After the first day spent thus, the presence of Joe and his party was discovered, and they resolved to wait until they had passed before continuing on their way.

"It would be extremely lucky for us if these Indians were to attack them," said Paget.

"That can be done," said Gutierrez.

"How so?"

"Let one of our men go ahead and tell them of this party, promise them a reward for attacking them and killing all hands, and the thing is done."

"Good. Let us adopt this plan forthwith."

An Indian was dispatched upon this errand, and the two villains waited anxiously for signs of the approaching massacre.

Down the rapids swept the boats, others having been launched besides that containing Joe and Pablo, and the Indians sent up a great shout at being cheated of their victims.

The yelling of the savages, the roar of the cataract and the noise of distant thunder, a storm being close at hand, combined to make a most horrible din, which added to the impressiveness of the scene.

Flashing lights on shore, white and rushing waters, the dark background of trees, crossed now and then by the forked lightning, all these added to the weirdness of the scene, and produced an impression upon the mind not readily effaced.

The guides plied the paddles vigorously, but as the boats were swept into the current, which ran faster than any mill race, it was soon seen that their efforts, though brave, would only prove futile, and that destruction stared them in the face.

The boats were wrecked, but fortunately nearly all the occupants were thrown upon an island, small in extent, though affording food and shelter, and as soon as the party were gathered together, preparations were made for spending the night.

Fires were lighted, around which the men gathered, and dried their wringing garments, prepared the evening meal, and built shelters for the night, as nothing could be done towards continuing the journey until morning.

After supper had been eaten and shelter prepared for the night, Joe and one of the party started off to examine the island and see if there was any chance of the Chiquitos surprising them.

They had nearly reached the water, when Joe's companion said, suddenly:

"There is a light!"

"It's our own fire; there is a little bay here, and we are looking across it."

"No, no; it is another island, and there is fire upon it."

"Suppose we change our position and see if we can get a better sight."

They walked along the shore for a few minutes, and then Joe said, in a whisper:

"You are right. There is a fire there, and it is another island. Who can it be?"

"May be Indians."

"I can see a figure moving in front of the flame. There can't be many there."

"Suppose we go over and reconnoiter. If they are Indians we want to know it."

"The current is too rapid."

"Not here; we can swim it with ease."

"Very well; let's try it."

Slipping off their outside garments and boots, and retaining only their knives, the two let themselves noiselessly into the water, and struck out for the little island.

The current was not very rapid here, and they had no trouble in maintaining a straight course to the opposite shore.

They selected a spot for landing where the shore shelved slightly, and after allowing the water to drip off, made their way quietly toward the fire, which they could now see quite plainly.

Dropping down upon their hands and knees, they crept quietly to the edge of a little clearing, in the midst of which was a bright fire, close to which were seated two men, whom Jose recognized in an instant.

They were Gutierrez and Paget.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SECOND glance showed Joe the form of Paulina lying in a grass hammock, swung from two trees, and as she made no motion he judged she was asleep.

His companion knew Gutierrez, and suspected that the other man was Paget, or Dubourg, of whom he had heard so much, and quietly nudging Joe he whispered:

"What had we best do?"

"Run in upon them. There are only two, and in the confusion they will think there are more of us."

"We can call to our comrades as though there were plenty more right behind."

"I will rescue the young lady while you take Paget, and then I will attend to this scoundrel Gutierrez. I owe him one as it is."

"All right. Give me the word when you are ready."

"Now, then. Charge!"

The two made a sudden rush and sprang into the clearing, Joe calling out:

"Hullo, Sam, Pablo, captain, comrades all! Here are the villains! Make haste and we shall cut off their retreat!"

Both men sprang to their feet, and Paulina, waking with a start, cried joyously:

"Jose, tell me that my darling Sam still lives!"

"He is not far away," answered Joe. "Now then, boys, charge them! Make all the noise you can," he added, in a quick aside to his comrade.

Then, springing upon Gutierrez, he seized

him by the throat, and, forcing him to the ground, pressed the point of his knife against the villain's breast.

Paget had taken the alarm in an instant, and springing aside, so as to avoid the blow of Joe's companion, dragged Paulina from the hammock, and dashed away with her in his arms into the thicket.

At the same moment he gave a warning cry, and in response to it half a dozen dusky forms leaped from the underbrush and rushed toward the two intruders, brandishing murderous-looking weapons, and uttering savage cries which would fairly make one's blood run cold.

The Portuguese beat down one of his assailants, and then shouting to Joe, leaped into the river, and swam for the island they had just left.

Joe heard the cry, and as Gutierrez had at that moment freed himself from his grasp, the young fellow leaped up, and burying his knife to the hilt in the breast of one of the Indians, followed his comrade and took to the water.

A shower of arrows and other missiles followed them, but fortunately they were not hurt, and before they had reached the further bank, Joe had aroused the camp, and when he left the water his friends were already at his side.

Quickly explaining the situation, he said: "Get the good boats, and follow me across. These villains must not escape."

All of the boats had not been wrecked, and in a short time three or four, well manned, shot across the intervening space, Joe and his friend leading the chase, and guiding the others to the spot where they had last seen Paget.

The fire was there still, but there was no trace of whites or Indians, the whole party having evidently decamped.

Joe, Pablo and the Portuguese dashed through the thicket, however, and reached the shore just as Paget and Gutierrez, with Paulina between them, were pushing off in a canoe.

"To the boats!" yelled Joe. "Go around the island and head these wretches off. Quick, or they will escape."

The larger number returned to the boats, but Joe, determined not to lose sight of the two men, leaped boldly into the current and swam toward the boat.

The stream ran faster here than it did upon the other side, however, and he felt himself being rapidly carried down stream, despite his most frantic efforts to reach the boat.

He struck out boldly, and had thrown one hand upon the gunwale and was reaching up to aim a blow at Gutierrez, when Paget dealt him a blow with the paddle, which caused him to lose his hold and slip back into the stream.

Paget laughed scornfully at him, and then the boat shot ahead, leaving the poor boy struggling in the fierce current.

The other boats soon came up, however, and he was lifted in, dripping wet; but, nothing daunted, his first words being:

"Don't let him escape, comrades. Follow and rescue that poor girl, and I'll give you half my fortune!"

A ringing shout was the answer, and the boats made all haste, though the two villains were now considerably ahead.

Paget and his accomplice gained the shore first and darted off into the woods, being out of sight when the pursuers reached the spot.

They struck a beaten path and followed it, rightly judging that the pursued would take the same road, as to plunge into the unbroken forest would be to lose themselves inextricably.

Torches were procured, and the brave fellows made all possible haste, finding the trail, but seeing nothing of those for whom they were searching, and yet knowing that they could not be far distant.

At the end of an hour they suddenly came in sight of the river again above the rapids, and ahead of them in the moonlight was a boat containing three persons.

It was at some distance, but Joe recognized the occupants at once, and in a frenzy of excitement he cried out:

"Keep along the bank, comrades. Hasten and get ahead if possible. I would give a hundred pistoles for a boat this very moment."

Away they dashed, but the boat maintained its lead, and presently disappeared behind a bend in the river.

The chase was not given up, however, the whole party hurrying along the bank, Joe encouraging them, and old Pablo, in spite of his years, keeping up with the youngest, and spurring them on to renewed exertion.

Suddenly loud shouts are heard ahead of them, and Joe exclaims:

"The Chiquitos! I had forgotten them. We must retreat."

They are about to fall back, when a number of canoes appear on the river, the foremost being occupied by a gorgeously clad figure, whose appearance betokens a white man rather than an Indian.

He is followed by a score of canoes filled with Indians, at sight of which Joe cries:

"Break for the woods, comrades, and distance these fiends. Keep together all you can, but do not let them overtake us."

"Stop, stop!" cries the figure in the boat. "I am a friend."

"'Tis false!" cries Joe, and in a moment he makes a break for the wood, followed by his friends, and in a few minutes the river is hidden from sight.

They regain it after a long detour and continue on their way, not a canoe or an Indian being in sight.

They do not care to wait for the Chiquitos, and continue their journey all night, never resting until morning.

Then they encamped, and Joe said:

"Comrades, remain faithful to me, and I can tell you of a place where you can all make your fortunes. This young lady must be rescued at all hazards."

"We are with you, heart and hand!" cried the miners.

Then let us set out for the post, and then for Matto Grosso and the diamond mines, and if we meet these villains——"

"Shoot them like dogs!"

"We will meet them beyond a doubt, for their way leads the same as ours. Let us rest awhile, and then, ho! for the diamond mines!"

CHAPTER XXII.

It was Sam who had called out for the party of whites to stop, his scouts having just informed him of their presence.

Those that they had seen were really the two runaways, but by the time the boat had been launched the four had disappeared, and Joe's party had come in sight.

Sam did not see his friend, but feeling sure that he would hear something about him, had called to this party to stop, in order that he might make inquiries.

He was deeply chagrined, therefore, to see the whole party take to flight, particularly as at that very instant he recognized Joe's voice calling to his companions to take to the woods.

He shouted and called in vain, for there was so much confusion that Joe did not hear him, or if he did, failed to recognize his voice, having no idea, of course, that his friend would be thus masquerading among a lot of savages.

So Joe and his party struck off for the mountains, while Sam knowing that such would undoubtedly be his friend's plan, determined to follow.

The Chiquitos were ready to do anything to please the young white god, and when he proposed that they leave the river and start for the mountains, they agreed without one dissenting voice.

He determined to make for the fort first, as thus he would be more likely to find his friend, for as only Pablo knew the hidden mine in the mountains, there would be little use in trying to find it without his directions.

The fort was, therefore, the first objective point, the Indians marching along the river bank in solid column with Sam at the head.

Let us now return to Joe and his party on their way to the same place, but considerably ahead of the others.

They made their way as rapidly as possible, meeting with no adventures, and at last came within sight of the fort.

Here Pablo proposed that he and Joe should go to the place where he had hidden the diamonds alone, as he did not care to have any one else see the treasure, fearing that the sight of so much riches might induce them to rob him.

He and Joe, therefore, set off alone, and after crossing the river, the old Brazilian began to take his bearings.

There was a solitary tree on the bank, and

taking a sight from this to the fort, he paced off a short distance, and then turning at right angles, walked about a hundred paces.

He suddenly paused and called to Joe to come up, the young man obeying instantly.

Joe had a pick, which he handed to Pablo, who struck it into the ground with considerable force.

Then a deathly pallor passed over his face, and he sank to the ground trembling with excitement.

His limbs shook, his lips moved as though he was muttering something, his face was bathed with cold sweat, and his head fell upon his breast.

"*Santa Maria!* The world has been disturbed," he muttered, faintly. "I am ruined!"

"Give me the pick," cried Joe, taking it from the old man's hand.

Gently pushing him to one side, Joe struck the pick into the earth, and loosening it, caught up a shovel which Pablo had laid down before beginning work.

The earth yielded readily, and a soft pile was soon lying beside the excavation made by the young fellow.

There was nothing to be found, however, and Joe knew too well by the ease with which the earth came up that it had recently been disturbed, and that the treasure was missing.

"The villains have been here before us," he cried, throwing down his tools.

"Dig deeper, young patron," said Pablo.

Joe struck the pick into the ground until he reached the hard earth, and with his shovel cleared away the loosened portions.

He dug a foot into the solid bank, but it was no use, and Pablo soon said:

"Desist; it was not so deep as that. The thieves have been here before us, and we are only wasting time."

"Then let us go to the mountains, for it is there that we shall find them."

They picked up their implements, leaving the hole unfilled, and quickly rejoined their comrades.

"The villains have got the start of us," said Joe, "and we must take to the mountains. Come, my friend, I do not yet despair of overtaking them."

"If we do meet them," said one, "I can promise them a warm reception."

"The lady must be rescued at all hazards," added a second.

"And the treasure recovered as well. These impudent braggarts shall have nothing."

"Forward, then!" cried Joe, "and woe to the wretches when we meet them!"

It was a weary journey to the mountains, and occupied many days, more than one of the party being upon the point of succumbing several times, but cheered and sustained by the hope of revenge, they rallied and rejoined their comrades.

It was a hot afternoon, more than a week after they had left the ford, and they were on the summit of a high mountain preparing to descend by the pass to the other side beyond, which at the distance of a few leagues lay the place which Pablo had spoken of.

All that day there had been ominous signs in the air, and Joe, who was well acquainted with the country, had vague apprehensions of coming danger.

The air was hot and sultry, and a murky, sulphurous haze seemed to hang all about them.

There was not a breath of wind, and the slightest exertion brought fatigue with it, every step seeming to bring them to a region hotter than they had just left.

Suddenly a distant rumbling was heard, and a slight tremor of the earth felt by the whole party.

No one spoke, but all hurried down the broad path, on one side of which was a steep precipice many hundred feet in height.

All at once there came a trembling of the earth, more violent than the preceding one, the air growing more oppressive and a heavy cloud appearing over their heads.

There was a loud thunder in the air as if two clouds had met, and as they hurried out, one of the party muttered:

"We shall have a storm, I fear."

"Worse than that," answered Joe, quickly.

"Do you fear—"

There came a clap of thunder louder than any that had come before, and the men's words were drowned in the tumult of sound.

The air grew black around them, and one single gust of wind swept down the pass, nearly taking them from their feet.

Then there came a rumbling, and of a sudden the solid rock tumbled beneath their feet, as though they had been on the ocean.

"*El tremblo!*" cried several, in terror.

"An earthquake, sure enough," replied Joe. "Just what I was afraid of!"

Then there was a decided trembling, the rock seeming to move beneath them, and nearly all were thrown from their feet.

An intense darkness prevailed, and then with a mighty shock and upheaval, the whole mountain seemed to rise and move rapidly to and fro with great rapidity.

Then in an instant, before one could think, there was a tremendous shaking, all hands were thrown down, and with a terrific rush the solid rocks slid with frightful rapidity down the mountain side.

There was no time for thought, for action, or anything else, and almost before they had realized it the party found themselves in a confused heap at the foot of a deep valley, the sky above them red and lurid, and all about them the crashing and splitting of huge trees, the rumbling of detached rocks, the rushing of waters let loose from their natural bed, and that same terrible trembling of the earth.

The earth suddenly yawned right before Joe's feet, and in his fright he would have fallen into the chasm, had not old Pablo seized him by the collar and dragged him away just in time.

Then the trembling suddenly ceased, the fissure closed with a loud report, and all was quiet.

The sky resumed its natural aspect, the wind blew soft and fragrant above them, the sweet songs of the birds mingled with the murmur of the stream, and all nature seemed peaceful once more.

The party now found themselves in a deep valley, shaded by lofty trees, a trembling rivulet flowing at their feet over the emerald grass, and all about them everything that could charm and delight the senses.

There was not the slightest trace of the terrible scenes that had so recently occurred, and one could hardly believe that a mighty earthquake had just agitated the mountain and laid waste many a fair tract of land.

Here all seemed peaceful and tranquil, and it was not until the party began to ascend and look about them that they realized the extent of the destruction.

"We have been mercifully spared," said Joe, as he and his friends, who had only been slightly bruised, reached the heights once more just as the sun was setting.

High rifts appeared in the rocks, and in the distance could be seen once peaceful villages now laid waste by the mass of rubbish which had been hurled upon them by the force of the shock.

It had altered their own course, for they found themselves many miles out of their way, and owing to the closing of certain passes which Pablo had expected to traverse, he calculated that it would require a whole day's march to enable him to get as near to his journey's end as they were before the earthquake.

"Suppose we should not find the place after all," said Joe.

"Then we must do the best thing that offers," said the old man, philosophically, and that was all he would say.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE march was continued, but it was at least a day before Pablo could find his bearing again, and another before he could regain the ground he had lost.

After much worry and vexation, however, he got upon the right track, and the journey proceeded, mules having been secured and a large party of slaves to drive and carry bundles, which made the work of Joe and his friends much lighter.

As they proceeded Old Pablo's hopes arose, the country being in exactly the same state as when he had last visited it, and his hopes of finding the hidden mine being therefore much greater than they had been at a former stage of the journey.

At last, one morning, he announced to Joe that they were within a quarter of a mile of the place, and that they had better proceed alone.

Joe thought differently, however, and so the whole party kept on, and presently they entered a narrow and very deep ravine, the entrance to which no one would have suspected to exist, so concealed was it.

Even after they had entered it the way was intricate, and the utmost caution had to be observed in order to keep from falling and losing one's life in some deep chasm.

Suddenly an unwonted sound broke the silence of the dreary place—the sharp ringing of a pick upon the rocks.

Pablo turned pale, and rushing forward, with Joe at his side, exclaimed:

"*Per Dios!* Are we then too late?"

So it seemed, for in another moment they came upon Paget, Gutierrez, and a party of strong men, engaged in the work of mining.

"Upon them!" shouted Joe, leveling a pistol at Paget's head. "Villain, your time has come."

The weapon missed fire, and, with a scornful laugh, Paget threw Joe to the ground and rushed upon Pablo with uplifted pick.

"Ha, ha! you old dog!" he hissed. "You shall not enjoy your secret after all, for I will kill you and your death will be made more bitter by the knowledge that your riches are possessed by another!"

"Forward!" shouted the men of Joe's party, as they hurled themselves upon Paget's crowd.

The Indians fled, however, leaving the miners alone, and it was soon seen that they were far less in numbers than those to whom they were opposed.

Gutierrez and Paget both saw this also, and, rallying their men, they charged impetuously, old Pablo being thrown down and several of the party being killed.

They fought manfully, however, and were pressing the villains closely, when a new force appeared, coming to the aid of Paget's men.

This was a party of slaves, among whom were many of the very men engaged by Joe, and who had just deserted him.

The young fellow sprang to his feet, and calling upon his friends to aid him, rushed again to the fray, cutting down a brawny villain who opposed him.

The enemy was too strong, though, and one by one his comrades were cut down, until there were but three or four remaining, and annihilation seemed inevitable.

"Kill them all!" yelled Paget. "Don't spare one!"

He was about to strike Joe down when there was a startling scream, and Paulina herself appeared from behind a boulder, where she had been hidden. She threw herself in front of Joe, and Paget stayed his hand, for he did not wish to harm her.

Joe and his few faithful friends were now surrounded by the enemy, and destruction seemed certain.

Paget urged on his men, and the work of death would have begun in another moment, had not an unforeseen event occurred.

Crack! There came the report of a rifle, and, with a terrible scream, Paget clapped his hand to his head, and fell dead upon the rocks.

Then there was a fierce shout, and an immense body of Chiquitos poured into the place from all sides.

At their head was a young white man, who cried aloud:

"Fear not, honest men; we are friends! It is only the villains that we seek to destroy."

Joe looked up, and seeing the young leader, cried:

"Sam! Alive and hearty, as I am a sinner!"

"Death to the villains!" cried the young man. "Now, then—upon them!"

Gutierrez turned to fly, when he was cut down by Joe, the Indians finishing the work in a short time.

They rushed impetuously upon the lawless whites and their slavish allies, and the fight began in earnest.

The Chiquitos spared none, and blood soon flowed like water, every one of the enemy having to face three or four of the fierce Indians.

In vain did they seek safety in flight, for the swift arrows of the Chiquitos followed them, and some were pierced by as many as a dozen of the poisoned barbs.

Joe hardly knew what to make of it; all that he realized being that Sam was still alive, and that he had brought this party to the rescue, though why he should be such a great man among them was a mystery.

Joe's friends were protected, the Chiquitos seeming to know who they were, but every one else was mercilessly cut down, the ground being soon fairly littered with the dead bodies of the victims.

Up and down through the ravine swept the Chiquitos, until at last not a single man of the party led by Paget remained alive, the two leaders themselves being stone dead and fairly riddled with bullets.

In the very midst of the fight Sam had broken through the struggling mass of combatants, and, seeking Paulina, had borne her in his arms to a place of safety, where he remained until the fight was over, fearing to lose her again if he allowed her out of his sight for a moment.

When all the villains had been dispatched and the battle was won, Sam advanced, with Joe and Paulina on either side, and said to the chief of the Chiquitos:

"My children, I must leave you now, and return to my own people. I am not a god, as you think, but a white man and human like yourselves. I am grateful for all your kindnesses, and hope some day to meet you again. Now, however, I must return. Leave us, I pray you."

The chief remained standing, with his men about him, and Joe whispered:

"We will need an escort, Sam, and these fellows are the best we can find."

Sam then said that if the Chiquitos wished to accompany him a short distance upon his journey, they might do so, and this proposal was received with every demonstration of delight.

Paget and Gutierrez being dead, nothing remained to be done but to secure the treasure and return to Rio with Paulina, and this plan was at once put in operation.

The packet stolen from the hiding-place near the fort was found upon the person of Paget, together with the parchment which he had taken from Pablo.

Considerable had been already taken from the secret mine, and this was made into bundles and put upon the backs of the mules.

There was no one to work the mine now, and the young men agreed to abandon it for the present, and at some future time return and set a large gang of men at work, as the stones were of unusually large size and quality, and there were fortunes for a great many to be made there.

What they had already was of no mean value by any means, and Sam's wedding present, as Pablo had termed it, was a rich one, indeed, being worth, prospectively at least, a hundred thousand dollars.

The meeting between the two friends was a joyous one, as might have been expected, and after the first greetings had passed they each related their adventures since their separation, and compared notes.

Sam had escaped the earthquake, though he had been detained by the changes it had made, arriving at the ravine, whither he had been attracted by the noise of the battle, just in time to be of service to his friends.

When all was ready the party set out, Paulina being mounted upon a mule, and riding beside Sam, Joe and Pablo coming next, and the Chiquitos following.

The course back was not the same as that by which they had come, our heroes preferring to cross the mountains rather than again risk the dangers of the river.

"No more tree-tops under water for me," said Joe. "I am quite satisfied with what I have already had."

The return was made over the mountains and through Bolivia into Brazil, where the traveled roads were soon met with and Rio was quite accessible.

It was with a great deal of difficulty that Sam persuaded the Chiquitos to leave him, succeeding only when he assured them that disaster would follow if they longer accompanied him.

At last, after many adventures, our friends reached Rio Janeiro, where Paulina was restored to her uncle, the poor man having long given up all hopes of ever seeing her or the young men again, and the reunion was indeed a joyous one.

The hidden mine was worked in after years, and both Joe and Sam became millionaires through it, old Pablo being content to live as he had done, satisfied with a little, and caring more to die poor among his friends than have all the wealth of the Brazils.

Sam and Paulina were wedded when the former came of age, and a more brilliant wedding was never seen, the display being a most dazzling one, even for a city like Rio, where magnificent affairs are of everyday occurrence.

There is no more to be told, except that Sam eventually returned to his native land upon the death of the brother of Da Rimeros, and that Joe accompanied him.

Old Pablo has long since died, and the diamond mine has been sold, still paying a handsome profit for the money and labor expended upon it.

Thus having seen our heroes out of their many troubles, having witnessed Sam married and settled down happily, and Joe the same light-hearted, faithful friend as of old, we will leave them, rejoicing that after all so much good came out of their strange journey in the flooded forest.

[THE END.]

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